

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

The Golden Collection 7

A collection of original publications
from the Bihar Yoga Tradition



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

The Golden Collection 7



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA
23rd–27th October 2013

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from the Bihar Yoga Tradition



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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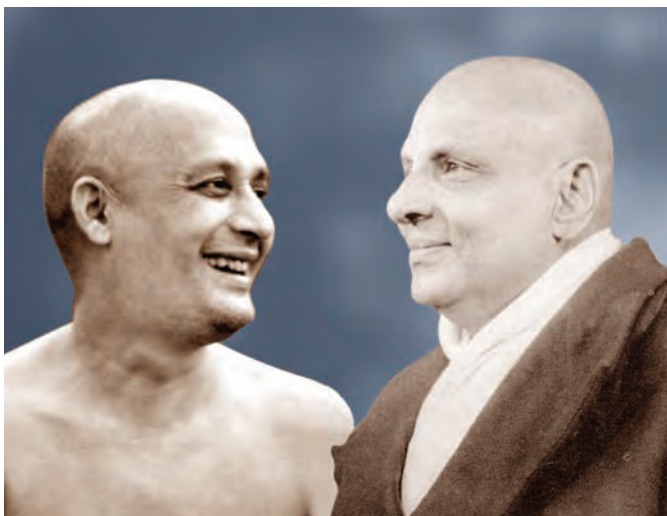
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga
and to our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our spiritual journey.*

Swami Niranjan

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Preface

In the early 1970s and 1980s, the devotees of Sri Swami Satyananda carefully printed and published his lectures, discourses and class transcripts in small booklets, preserving and disseminating these important teachings. The booklets were their first contribution to their guru's mission of 'spreading yoga from door to door and shore to shore'. For many years these gems from the past have been out of print and unavailable. On the occasion of the Bihar School of Yoga's Golden Jubilee 2013 celebrations, these lost works have been compiled into a set of volumes aptly named *The Golden Collection*, so that once again the classic words which launched a yoga movement can inspire spiritual aspirants around the world.

In reproducing the booklets the original language has been kept intact, conveying the flavour of the time. The language shows the care that Sri Swami Satyananda took to make his teachings clear to his audience, never compromising clarity for fashion or style. His ability to present and adjust any topic to any audience is proof of the versatility which enabled him to convey his deep understanding of the potential of yoga to meet the needs of all.

A pioneer of his time, Sri Swami Satyananda gave a new dimension to the practice of asana, stating clearly that it can take the practitioner far beyond physical wellbeing. He often guided his disciples through letters brimming with snippets

of wisdom, which are as valuable and pertinent today as they were almost fifty years ago. *The Golden Collection* also includes a systematic introduction to the various meditation practices expounded by Sri Swami Satyananda. No step is missed and no precaution left out, allowing the aspirant to safely travel the journey of yoga and spiritual life. For each practice, whether antar mouna, ajapa japa or nada yoga, precision and clarity are the key. The branches of yoga are concisely elucidated, making them relevant to the daily life of each yoga aspirant.

Much that is taken for granted today was unknown or misunderstood at that time: it is the great achievement of Sri Swami Satyananda to have brought yoga to the general public and mainstream of society, truly making yoga a household word the world over.

The extraordinary quality of his being and spiritual attainments was recognized early in his life. While living in Rishikesh in the ashram of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, the young swami received glowing appreciation and admiration from guru-bhais, visitors and guests. To this day, tributes continue to express love and a sense of profound gratitude from all who have been touched by this modern day saint and his teachings. Sri Swami Satyananda, however, remained a disciple throughout his life and fulfilled his guru's mandate by making it his life's mission.

The Golden Collection is a true testimony to the wealth and depth of yoga and to its master exponent, Sri Swami Satyananda. In his early teachings he set the tone, purpose and aim of his mission. The reader is able to discover and connect with the roots of Satyananda Yoga, whilst appreciating its evolving contemporary nature, a trademark of this tradition.

Indeed, Sri Swamiji's prophecy, "yoga is the culture of tomorrow", has come true. His tomorrow is our today.



Introduction:

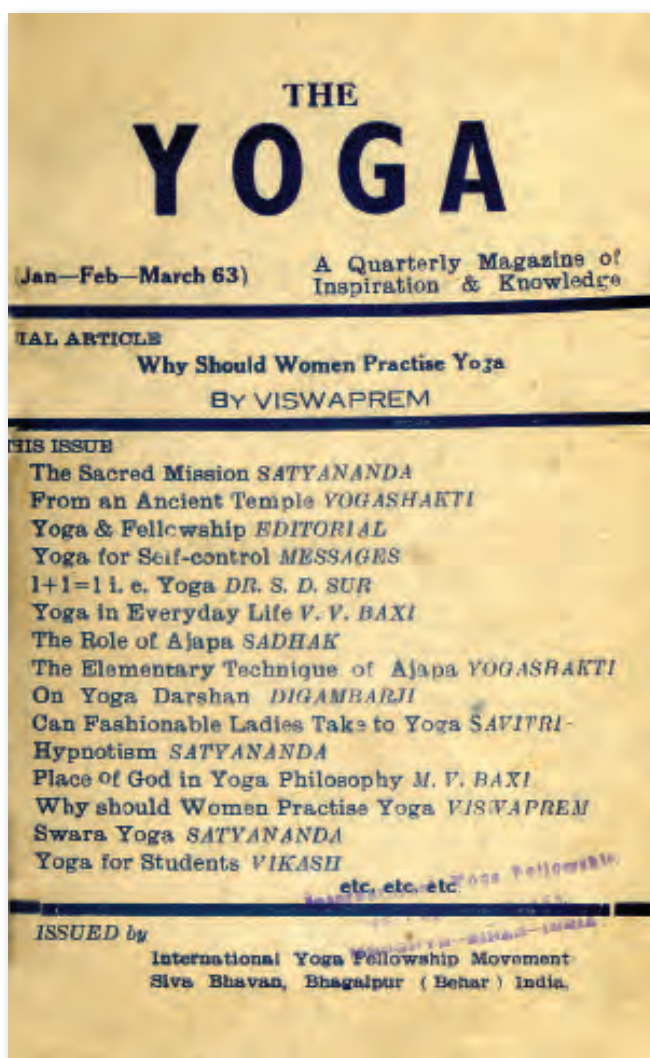
Yoga – Testimonies of Love

On the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, the Bihar School of Yoga presents a collection of tributes paid to its founder, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. From 1963 to 2009, *Yoga* magazine was the medium where people from around the world expressed their feelings for the yogi, the guru and guide. They recognized the value, novelty and depth of his teachings. Personal tributes, messages of gratitude and simple declarations of love were printed in the magazine. Some tell of a personal encounter that changed lives, others testify of yoga practices which helped deal with mental or physical difficulties, other tributes speak of the inspiration received to lead a spiritual life.

The authors had different experiences: a personal meeting, a yoga course, a lecture to an enraptured audience, or just a single fleeting glimpse of Sri Swamiji. Whatever the occasion, life was not to be the same again. Some relationships lasted for decades, others ended shortly after the first encounter. Yet the impact was undeniable, and everyone was aware that something of great importance had occurred in their lives.

Inspiration never ceased to flow through Sri Swamiji's work and being. People met him in Munger, in cities and towns of India, on every continent of the globe and in the hamlet of Rikhia. Everywhere, he was the same dynamic

Yoga 1960s



messenger of wellbeing, peace and hope for a better world. People from all walks of life, at home and abroad, were able to connect to this Indian yogi who brought them yoga and a new way of living life. The tributes highlight of his skill to adjust to one and all, to clearly deliver his message and teachings in an accessible way,, and to instil courage and motivation in the hearts of those who came into contact with him.

In the last twenty years of his life, Sri Swamiji's teaching expanded even more, and Rikhia became the nucleus of another revolution. After yoga, *seva*, service, and *yajna*, sacrificial rites, opened the doors to a new understanding of life and its purpose. This teaching was welcomed with open arms, admiration and gratitude. Again Sri Swamiji had filled the need of the time by showing how to use the benefits of yoga, *seva* and *yajna* for the upliftment of humankind.

Over the many decades, Swami Niranjanananda too paid tribute to Sri Swamiji in *Yoga* magazine. He elucidated the depth and intention of Sri Swamiji's teaching and mission. His explanation gave perspective; he placed Sri Swamiji in the context of the ancient spiritual traditions of India and the yogic renaissance of the 20th century. In this way, Swami Niranjan gave people an understanding which allowed them to grow and to embrace change and innovation.

Hardly a year went by without tributes printed to Sri Swamiji, expressing sincere appreciation of an exceptional being and his exceptional mission. A selection of those published in *Yoga* magazine are presented in this volume and continue to inspire and encourage the reader to follow the path shown by a true Master.

1963

Swami Sivananda – our Paramguru

His passing away has left a seeming void. But we have still in our midst Swami Satyanandaji. He is the solitary exception to whom the hidden teachings of yoga were imparted and he will certainly fill the void as he is engaged in translating into action Swamiji's unfulfilled dream of making yoga popular. The architect of the International Yoga Fellowship, Swami Satyanandaji is the next to Swamiji in the modern age to bring the secret of yoga from hidden recesses to the public platform. He has taken it out of the ivory tower and brought it to the public streets. For Swami Sivananda has bequeathed this trust of occult science to Swami Satyanandaji, the only chosen one to fulfil a dream and a destiny.

—*Srimati Savitri Sahai, Bhagalpur*

Swami Satyananda Saraswati enters the Holy Order of Paramahansa

With mixed feelings of joy and sorrow, I have to advise the devotees, friends and disciples of Swami Satyanandji Maharaj that Swamiji's period of parivrajaka sannyasa ends in December 1963. Until now he went from door to door, house to house, place to place, immersed in the work of public welfare and we were fortunate enough to have the sight of this great saint as a parivrajaka during his itinerary.

This saint, steeped in yoga, came to our homes and initiated us into the secret, difficult and coded techniques of yoga, but now this easy access has been made impossible.

And yet, at the hands of Gurudev, something greater in dimension is being fulfilled. His parivrajaka stage expires in January 1964, and transfers him to the order of Paramahansa. From next year onwards, Swamiji will not be undertaking any tours but will stay good in Munger. He will remain introvert all the time and his field of work will lie in an endeavour to give spiritual advancement to everyone. The powers of a sadhu become more dynamic in scope and substance when he remains introvert; for silence has greater power than speech. The light of spiritual power will spread from Munger and illumine the path of sadhana and ultimate bliss. Those who aspire to go on this path of spiritual advancement and those who want a guide for further progress on that path are requested to establish contacts with Swami Satyananda Saraswati in his School in Munger and be blessed, for who knows when he will give up residence in Munger and make his abode in the Himalayas.

—*Ma Yogashakti*



1964

Book review

In Bhavan's Journal of 7 December 1963

The book under notice, *Steps to Yoga*, is just a compilation of a number of letters written by Swami Satyananda to two of his disciples, Vishwaprem and Satyabrat.

The swami, as seen in this book, is everywhere at pains to harmonize the theoretical and practical aspects of yoga and it is true to say that he is at his best while doing so. His sincerity and simplicity of style stand out prominently all through. The author, who is the architect of the International Yoga Fellowship, is a living symbol of the search and the realization of the higher values of life. In his writings and discourses he is constantly seen hammering on the point that it is only through the practice of yoga that many ills – they may be mental, physical or moral – can be efficiently, and successfully remedied. In a word, yoga is a panacea, according to him and therefore his sole emphasis is on the mechanics and dynamics of yoga.

—Dr A. S. Gopani

The Bihar School of Yoga through the student's eyes

Extract from letter to the Editor

I feel it has been a great privilege and a gift from God to me, for being able to come to this school of yoga, where our Swamiji has been very patient, loving and understanding towards each one of us.

In this ashram, I have felt like being away from a world of materiality and in a spiritual realm, with such utter peace and love and joy and in tune with my creator; that I wish it could be possible to come again and again.

—*Daulet P. Dalal, Bombay*

A higher way of living

Letter to the Editor

Million-throated thanks will go out day and night to Mr K. N. Goenka, the pillar of strength, who is instrumental in making the dream of our Gurudeva a reality.

I count myself as one amongst the many who were very fortunate in having attended and imbibed the knowledge and wisdom imparted at BSY. Our fifteen-days session has taught us through all the various yogic techniques, how to control our senses, our minds, and channel various thought processes to a higher way of living and ultimately to become God-realized.

I, personally, take it as a grace of God for giving me this wider divine vision and for working this change of pattern in my life.

May our revered Gurudeva live long to fulfil his dream of yoga being established and practised in every house.

—*Homi Umroliya, Bombay*

The ashram

Letter to the Editor

I consider myself very fortunate to have attended the 4th session of the Bihar School of Yoga.

It is wonderful that within a short period of fifteen days, we are given physical, mental and spiritual training, which if earnestly pursued in daily life is bound to bring in rich rewards in all three planes. This is due to Swamiji's inimitable way of teaching a subject like yoga, giving it to us in small palatable doses.

I firmly believe that everyone should attend at least one session per year, for it is both a cure and a tonic. Under Swamiji's wise and kindly guidance life at this school is simple yet not austere, systematic yet not rigid. The Bihar School of Yoga is indeed a splendid institution which vividly reflects Swamiji's charming and divine personality.

May our Gurudeva's wise message spread far and wide.

—*Mani H. Umrolia, Bombay*

A siddha-hasta

Letter to the Editor

Though I was actively associated with the International Yoga Fellowship movement and was fortunate enough to be in close association of Ma Yogashakti, when she first broached the idea of having a school of yoga and soon translated her idea into practice by issuing the syllabus, frankly I was a little doubtful about the response, as from the syllabus that prescribed the course. I wondered how yoga with different modes of sadhana could be taught in fifteen days, specially the mudras and chhaya upasana and the technique of kriya yoga.

I had seen in Bombay the simple, direct and appealing technique which our Gurudeva, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, used in teaching masses of men in ajapa and chidakasha dharana. But when I came in the 4th session, I learnt for

myself how, with a master's magic hand Gurudeva slowly and patiently led us step by step through these practices. None but a siddha-hasta could do that, and I am convinced that those who are victims to muscular, mental and emotional afflictions should miss no opportunity to avail themselves to the blessings which this institution under the direction of Gurudeva and Ma Yogashakti gives. It is an experience which no other quest, however eager, in other directions will bestow.

Gurudeva lives up in practice to this ideal which he propounded in his pregnant observation, "We are one family". None misses the home, none remains cheerless; for the ever abiding cheerfulness and the robust optimism of Gurudev radiates peace and bliss.

—V. V. Baxi, Bombay

Towards a divine life

Letter to the Editor

Practical yoga in daily life is the need of the hour and the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, is an ideal divine institution for imparting practical lessons of yoga and thus enabling a man to lead a divine and spiritual life – the only life worth living by human beings. The acharya of the school, HH Swami Satyananda Saraswati, is a charming personality, inspiring with divine feelings all those who are fortunate enough to come into contact with him, particularly those blessed ones who pass fifteen days in the school. For fifteen days, I remained in his company at his school and I have derived immense benefit as far as moulding of life in the direction of divine meditation is concerned. The art of concentrating consciousness on the various chakras beginning from nasikagra down to mooladhara chakra is a unique art of meditation – so wonderfully imparted by Swamiji.

—Prof V.K. Sharma
*Head of the Dept. of Political Science,
R.D. & D.J. College, Munger*

Welcome

Extract from letter to the Editor

Fate conspired against me one night of sleet and terrible cold and I found myself a prey to such circumstances, with my nerves like sandpaper, tense and uncomfortable and in the midst of despair, disillusion, self-pity and heart perversion. I came to Swamiji, who immediately smiled and held out hope and optimism and said, “Welcome.”

We are suffering from spiritual anarchy and this school offers the assistance one needs and delivers man from nescience to omniscience. To me, it has been a proud privilege to live here with His Holiness Swami Satyananda Saraswati – a vastly-read man and a great yogi. It has been a dreamland to me and I feel like not leaving this satsang for all times to come.

—A.P. Banerji, Munger

Perfection

Extract from letter to the Editor

I feel it a special gift to me from God to come in contact with our dear Swamiji and Ma Yogashakti. I had my first private interview one Thursday 1962 which will always remain a holy day for me. It was 12 o'clock as I opened the door and he was already standing there. The first glimpse that I caught was the glory of God in human form. It was bright as the Sun. I was thrilled to the very core of my heart and could not believe my eyes. I have been longing for that glimpse ever since. When the school opened it was my dream to be there, and here I am with Swamiji's grace.

Yoga vidya as taught by our Swamiji is a perfect science in itself, or may I say, a perfect religion taught in a perfectly scientific way. It makes me perfect from all angles, by removing all ailments of human personality, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

—Mrs Ishwari Mansukhani, Bombay

A world of its own

Letter to the Editor

I give thanks to God in enabling me to visit and stay at the Bihar School of Yoga. It is a unique institution, bringing enlightenment and peace to the students.

Swamiji is to be congratulated for this unparalleled school, a world entirely of its own, of which he is the presiding genius.

God's blessings on our beloved Gurudev for the great work he is doing.

—Mrs Tehmina B. Patel, Bombay

Food from within

Letter to the Editor

The Bihar School of Yoga is a unique institution imparting the highest knowledge to one and that is the knowledge of self-realization. The acharya, Swami Satyanandaji, has a vivid personality is kind and full of humour and has also a zest to convey the knowledge he has gathered to others by means of various spiritual practices, such as asana and pranayama.

Yoga is a practical science of living. It is a must for every man, as it teaches one to attain a normal, healthy and balanced life. In the modern social whirl of life, a man, though he is well settled in life, still feels that he lacks something and that, although he has fed his body so long and is having a robust health, the spirit in him is uncared for and is unknowingly craving for its food from within. This food is being supplied by our Swamiji to those who earnestly thirst for it.

I prayed for years together, I still felt that there is something more to know and realize, and after having come in contact with Swamiji my thirst has really been quenched and I now feel that life is worth living if only you know 'HOW'.

—Miss Zerine Limathwala, Bombay

Peace of mind

Letter to the Editor

I first saw Swamiji in 1962 in Bombay when he was giving yoga discourses at K.C. College and since then every time he came to Bombay I attended his lectures at Cama Hall and also at Prem Kutir. It is his inspiring spiritual lessons and dynamic personality and his melodious voice which attracted me to come over to Munger and I am very fortunate for coming over to the Bihar School of Yoga all the way from Bombay. The Sadhana Course has helped me to have peace of mind and has increased my mental and spiritual development. I sincerely pray to the Almighty Lord to bless the founders of this yoga school.

—*Joe Fernandes, Bombay*

From a sadhaka's diary

Editorial (extract)

Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati has lectured widely throughout India. His exposition of themes is simple and direct. Extravagance and exuberance in style is conspicuous only by its absence. He does not teach or preach. He thinks aloud and invites sadhakas to participate in an earnest discussion of progress and problems of sadhana.

Report of the annual convention of the Bihar School of Yoga

Extract

The Diwali holidays fell during the days of the convention and the delegates celebrated Diwali on 4th November 1964, by performing Lakshmi Pooja and by distributing prasad to all. Illuminations were also made by lighting five hundred candles.

The most significant and important item of the function was held on the last day. It was the program of poor-feeding. 108 Daridranarayans were fed sumptuously. It was touching to see Swamiji and Ma Yogashakti moving about and personally supervising the feeding and the Secretary Shri K.K. Goenka putting tilak marks on the foreheads of these destitute people. It was something very touching indeed and showed how Swamiji was filled with a great love for these human beings who symbolized Narayana.

—General Secretary, BSY



1965

The Bihar School of Yoga

Extract from an advertisement

The Bihar School of Yoga is a unique institution designed to disseminate the yoga culture among the masses. Situated on the banks of holy Ganges in Munger, Bihar, the school has the correct spiritual atmosphere in which yoga sadhana is imbibed. The school has fifteen-day sessions where aspirants are subjected to a rigorous training in yoga. Its workday begins at 4 am and ends at 10.30 pm. Inaugurated in January 1964, the school has proved extremely popular and admission applications are received from all parts of India. Many aspirants are on the waiting list as the school takes only thirty students at a time, individual attention being the core of yoga initiation.

Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati is the acharya of the school. A vast cross-section of the Indian public knows him as symbolizing the spirit of humility and great tradition of yoga culture. A saint who believes that 'yoga is the culture of tomorrow', Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati has taken upon himself the heroic task of making people yoga-minded and resurrecting them from the obliviousness of the great heritage of India.

Convention time

Extract from the Editor's notes

The Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, celebrated its annual functions by holding an All-India Yoga Convention from 1st to 7th November 1964. It was an epoch-making convention held for the first time in the history of yogic conventions.

Over seven hundred delegates from all over the country joined the convention and took part in its weeklong deliberations. Eminent speakers, acclaimed scholars, political personalities and mahatmas addressed the representative gathering on various topics of yoga for seven days.

Among twenty-one speakers who addressed the convention there was one distinct and ringing tone – majestic, authoritative and unique – which arose from the dais and chanted its spell in the minds of the audience. Most eloquent, deeply inspiring and out and out dynamic in language, in delivery and in import, the speech would emerge as if from the depth of an ancient cave and would end dramatically at the end of the tenth minute.

This voice was the heart-spoken and graceful speech of Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati. His speeches left an abiding effect on the minds of all for the style, the novel approach and the captivating and smiling tone.

A dedication to my worthy Guru

Brave sons, and daughters of Mother India,
Awaken she calls, slumber no more;
To save your country from times grotesque,
Arise, unite, and come to the fore.

When powers big, all over the Earth,
Destructive energies only devise;
India's peace-loving children, show your worth,
Finding means, the above to de-energize.

If scientists great of other countries, just live
Atomic energies for destruction to seek;
May God to our scientists the power give,
To de-atomize these energies freak.

A power supreme is at our command,
To tap, tend and grasp to one's heart;
What our spiritual masters earnestly demand,
Is a call from us, their knowledge to impart.

To just dance, smoke, drink and mimic the West, is not life
Westerners themselves to us, come all the way;
Seeking knowledge of yoga, our true heritage,
Which we in ignorance from it, drift away.

Think not yoga is for sadhu, sannyasis only,
And asanas mere body contortions, to give pain;
Through postures, pranayama and yoga's other branches,
Relaxed, we peace, bliss, power and liberation do gain.

The colossal work our blessed Guru has undertaken,
May he succeed, giving yoga its rightful place in life;
By spreading its knowledge, to our youth and the masses,
To free them from tensions, frustrations and strife.

In taking up yoga caste or creed is no bar,
Nor change of religion needed, to live a life sublime;
A better Hindu, Muslim, Christian,
Zoroastrian you can be by far,
By the silent practice of yoga, be one with the Divine.

—Mrs Teh-Marz

Homage

Extract from a poem

On the banks of the holy river Ganges, at Monghyr,
An institution unique of its kind does stand;
Where yoga sadhana in correct spiritual atmosphere
Is imbibed, and its training rigorous is taken up in hand.

Its 'acharya' Paramhansa Satyananda Saraswati,
The worthy principal of this institute grand;
Himself a saint, symbolizing the spirit of humility,
For the spread of yoga culture heroically stands.

—Mrs Teh-Marz

Beauties of BSY

Extract

The unassuming, charming personality of our Swamiji makes one forget all and even one's own self. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, whom you know too well to need any introduction from me, is the acharya and the fountain of inspiration of the school. My words fail to express how great he is. Wearing a garb of simplicity, charity, love, modesty and affection he will read your heart as in cold print and lay his fingers on what lies at the very root.

—Kumari Suchandra Gupta

Guru Poornima, a day of homage and rededication

Today is a blessed day. It is the day of rededication to the guru and his mission.

In the *Shatashloki Shankara* it says that the guru is incomparable. A parasmai by its touch converts base metal into gold but cannot transform it to its own likeness. A guru transforms his disciples and makes them like himself. Such indeed is the greatness of guru.

Our Gurudeva Paramahansa Swami Satyananda indeed does and by his teachings transforms many lives leading them from darkness to light. For the guru is the dispeller of darkness of ignorance.

Let us then on this day in prayerful reverence pay our homage to this great Guru and let us rededicate ourselves to him so that he may lead us on and on to regions of bliss and glory.

—His disciples

Our Second International Yoga Convention

In the latter part of the last century when there was corruption everywhere, God sent his messengers like Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati and Raja Rammohan Roy. Who knows if in the coming years the International Yoga Fellowship will not be as prominent as Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the chief architect of the movement, may be compared with the great social leaders mentioned above, considering his enthusiasm and zeal for the mission and his ceaseless working, day and night, for the annual convention. But time will do that in the best possible way. We leave it at that.

—Miss Suchandra Gupta

Experience of a past student of BSY

During the 6th Session, from 3rd to 17th May 1965, I, along with my wife and two sons, had joined the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. We really enjoyed the perfect spiritual atmosphere in the school which is an ideal place. On our arrival, we received the warm welcome from Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Swamiji has an awe-inspiring personality. He taught us with great love kriya yoga, concentration and meditation techniques, psychic sleep called yoga nidra, shankhaprakshalana, asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas. He explained most wonderfully the subjects of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga.

Guruji has a powerful personality. He treats all persons kindly. We daily remember his ever-smiling magnetic face saying, “Hari Om Tat Sat” to all at 2 am as a waking up signal. He is a spiritual dynamo with a very humble nature.

We salute him for his great and perfect spiritual guidance.
Jai Gurudeva!

—Dara D.Karkaria, Dara Armaity,
Phillie and Rayomand Karkaria of Bon

The hub of the wheel

Everybody who knows Swamiji before he made his mission, including Sri Satyabratji and others, know very well that it was Swamiji alone who made the Sivananda Ashram. Such is the acumen, zeal and ability of my Satyam that you will simply be amazed at the following incident.

It was the month of February 1964. It was morning and somebody from a suburb station on hearing that a Paramahansa Swami had recently come to reside in Munger came to meet Swamiji. Just when he came, Swamiji was cleaning the flush latrines which had been badly blocked, with broomstick and a piece of stick in his hand. As I looked old with my beard, the gentleman enquired of me and expressed his curiosity in meeting Paramahamsaji.

Would you believe that he was simply stunned and taken aback and went back silently when he came to know from me that the same man who was cleaning the latrines was the Paramahansa Sadhu.

Such is the nobility of the master under whom I have the proud privilege of living and doing all my activities.

Before I conclude I must pay my homage to Swamiji and admit that in fact it is Swamiji and Swamiji alone who is working ceaselessly without expecting any reward or return. He is working through me and through many others in so many names and forms.

—*Swami Prathananda Saraswati*

1966

Ma Yogashakti speaks of Gurudeva

People wish to write something on Gurudeva. This desire is natural. We who work through the senses are naturally interested in the sensual aspect of things. Things outside the senses of touch, smell, hearing, etc. do not attract us. First we hear something about someone. After hearing we have the desire to see the person. Then we like to have an exchange of thoughts and ideas with him and stay near him. People read books, articles and lessons of Gurudeva. So this desire of knowing more about him is obvious.

Usually people are afflicted with the bad habit of questioning a person too much after the introduction is over. Sometimes when we meet a new person and are introduced to him we are all the more curious to know his name, his father's name, occupation, caste, creed, religion, family and children, education and the like. If we are not satisfied with an answer then we are all the more curious. Sometimes the questions cross the limits and are strictly personal but men cannot be kept uninformed either.

Here I am not out to answer you the questions relating to the private and personal life of Gurudeva and I do not know much about it. Although people believe that I have full knowledge of his life history, but I tell you the truth when I say that I was and am more interested in his sadhana and spiritual progress than his personal life.

I have already told many people and have written also how I came to know Gurudeva. Having more instructions in sadhana I came to know this that he is an expert of many vidyas. If he did not know them himself he could not have taught me, but he never told me that he knew such a lot. I have done eighteen hours of continuous sadhana under the guidance and supervision of Gurudeva. Now too I have to work with him in regard to our mission, but I do not remember a single moment when he discussed with me any other thing excepting sadhana and mission work. In the beginning there was an urge in my heart to know about him, to ask him all kinds of questions, but I have learnt after staying under his strict supervision that he never does talk, listen or think of any unnecessary things. Whereas he is such a magnetic, polite and amiable person to talk to in public, he is just the contrary with his disciples. He is a strict disciplinarian, impatient and hard-hearted with the aspirants. All his time is devoted in work, sadhana, spiritual progress and the fulfilment of his mission. We can hardly talk to him of any thing else excepting the training of sadhakas and the means of spreading the message of the mission far and wide. If anyone talks on any other subject he puts a pertinent question, "How can you have time for such idle thoughts? You waste your life in ruminating over the past and thinking of the future and that is why you cannot progress the way you should."

The very first lesson of Gurudeva is 'spare no moment'. Do not lose even a second. Work, work and work. Practise sadhana, do japa, practise meditation, anushtana and work. Neither does he know any other thing except these nor does he engage his time in any other thing. That is why, even after staying so very near him, I know not much about him that the people, generally, would like to hear. Very few get the opportunity that I got of staying near him.

He is so very punctual and an adherent to rules that he never failed to perform his daily sadhana even in the train. He is strong-willed and a man of principle, not ready to surrender

himself before anyone. It is evident from his writings that he was and is a worshipper of truth. He moves in his own way, as regards the propagation of yoga, religion and sadhana. I have always heard him say that today people are not farsighted. They only think of the present and brood over the past. They are engaged so much with the momentary pleasures and earthly desires that they fail to see beyond. By sacrificing his indispensable life for the welfare of humanity he is certainly playing the part of a saviour, a prophet.

When I portray Gurudev as a man of this universe, he comes to me as an iconoclast, a revolutionary sadhu who is a staunch believer of action. His aim is to make a synthesis of yoga, religion, knowledge, science, psychology, medical science, mantra, tantra and yantra. The foundation of this new culture will be yoga, spirituality will be the highest pinnacle and modern science will be the cementing factor and the wall between. Gurudeva neither belongs to that group of conservative, traditionalist sadhus who detest modern things, nor is he one of those ultra-modernists who cannot afford to see the richness and goodness in old things.

Whatever knowledge he has derived from Indian spirituality and philosophy, he is trying to coin them into a modern version. That is why he may be called 'the modern' among the moderns. Even after having his education in one of the best convents amongst the English children, he did not forget his own religion. Conversion to Christianity was tried on him, but he was too conscious of his nation and religion and never failed to fight for them. Later he was given the higher education in philosophy and being ever thirsty for knowledge he studied all the departments of science simultaneously.

I am reminded of Sukracharya after seeing Gurudeva. He had profound knowledge at a very young age. At an early age he had planned out a program for his life and executed it accordingly in future. After getting the highest possible education he left home in search of a guru. After coming in contact with many sadhus ultimately he was initiated into the holy order of sannyasa by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh.

Swami Satyananda learnt the complete theory and technique of yoga under the able guidance of Swami Sivananda. Service to the Rishikesh Ashram and sadhana went side by side. There he was almost unique in his devotion and sincerity in whatever work he did. In a book called *Satyananda – His Life and Works*, a publication of Sivananda Ashram, Swami Sivananda has written, "Few would have such vairagya at such a young age. Swami Satyanandaji is full of the Nachiketa element. Yet any work that he takes up he will complete in a perfect manner. He does the work of four people and yet never complains. He is a versatile genius and a linguist too. Yet he is humble and simple, an ideal sadhu and nishkamyā sevak. He is a pillar of the Divine Life Mission. May God bless him with health, long life, peace, prosperity and eternal bliss."

Swami Satyanandaji had the capacity to do the work of four people alone. He worked unceasingly day and night. When he was made in charge of the press, he worked there with sincerity and regularity. He was not fond of eating and drinking. If you do not believe me then ask any inmate of the Rishikesh Ashram who saw Swamiji there. I am not exaggerating at all. No one could compete with him in spiritual progression that he made by means of sadhana. Even when dangerously sick and taken to bed, he did not leave his anushthana. It is evident from his magnetic personality, divine appearance and cheerful face that he is not of this world. His high spiritual magnetism attracts everyone.

Whatever work or department he had to look after in the ashram, he supervised it with sincerity and loyalty. He compelled others to work too. In extra enthusiasm and zeal to fulfil his ambition, he never cared for what people said, whether they agreed or disagreed, they endorsed his views or not. As a master he was very strict and compelled others to do their duties properly. Swamiji was and still is an active and dynamic sadhu.

Many people were drawn towards him by his sharpness, intellectualism and the ability to discuss spiritual matters,

in the ashram itself. Moreover, there are innumerable disciples of Swami Sivananda who had taken diksha from him but regarded Swami Satyananda as their sadhana-guru. Swami Prarthanananda, Satyabrat, Dharmashakti – were initiated by Swami Sivananda. Gurudeva knows them from his ashram life. They all know and realize what dynamism and missionary spirit runs through our Swamiji. He is a bold, practical and modern sadhu of his own way. He is fully aware of the fact that life has to be made progressive and peaceful by placing yoga in the right place in this atomic age. The key to happiness, peace and prosperity is with him. He wants to distribute peace, power and wisdom by unlocking our temple door. With this aim in view he is playing the role of the acharya of the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. the Bihar School of Yoga is a unique attempt of this age.

—*Ma Yogashakti*



1967

Liberation of the soul

Addressed to Paramahansa Satyananda on the eve of his retirement

A veil is falling from the eyes
And hearing is clearer and sharper;
You are seeing things which others do not see
And you can hear the music of the higher spheres.
As if on the borderline of two planes
You are living, praying, meditating.
Ready and not ready to embrace Nirvana . . .
You are here with us, do not hurry, wait –
There are so many things to be done,
So many disciples to be taught,
So many hearts to be enlightened . . .
Let us watch the lotus flower of your soul
Slowly opening towards infinity.

—Michael Volin, Australia

Yoga, my new vision

Speech delivered at the Third International Yoga Convention

I tried to visualize before my eyes a picture of Swamiji, both in Bombay and in the train. I expected to find myself placed before a tall and stately giant of rare proportions, perhaps

with a beard, and what do I find instead? A bald, beardless, short-statured, unassuming and a supremely modest individual repeatedly struggling to put himself on the same level with me, and most of us, ordinary as we are. But, what is cannot be hidden or destroyed by exaggerated modesty, thereby I mean, Swamiji's radiance in the eyes and from his face, his limitless stores of energy, his majesty of stature.

Anybody who encountered Swamiji and stood face to face is bound to be paramountly spellbound and stupefied with these gifts of God and rare qualities in him. The few hours I had the honour to talk with and listen to Swamiji, which appeared to me like minutes, had made me so wholly engrossed in the topics of discussion that my mind was totally void and empty of all other thoughts, especially those overflowing with worries and suspense, which perhaps only a city like Bombay can provide and offer to humanity. That was my first wonderful experience of supreme relaxation and peacefulness of mind – something yoga only can administer in the desirable dose.

—*Sri M.D. Japheth*

Where real spiritual goals can be reached

I have had the honour to meet personally one of those uncommon men whose main task seems to be to show people where the crystal of eternal life is shining. I have met Sri Swami Satyananda, the chief representative of the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger.

Everybody who practises some spiritual discipline knows that the most valuable knowledge is obtained through practice, not through books. These practical experiences can be received to a great degree at the Bihar School of Yoga. Sri Swami Satyananda and Ma Yogashakti belong to those spiritual leaders who can communicate their experiences simply, materially and in regard to the spiritual level of the disciple. It is an uncommon quality possessed by very few.

It was my good fortune to be admitted to private evening discussions with Swamiji. These evening talks have been

exceptionally valuable to me and have greatly influenced my outlook on life. As a journalist I am naturally interested not only in spiritual but also in worldly affairs. During my stay in Munger, however, I forgot my profession and became simply a man seeking truth. Many questions were put to Swamiji by me or by other visitors at the Bihar School of Yoga. He answered every question with absolute clarity.

—*Roman Hardy, Czechoslovakia*

Journey to India

At the gate of the Bihar School of Yoga Swami Satyananda greeted me warmly and welcomed me as a wandering pilgrim into the garden. Nothing is isolated. Everything has a connection to everything else. That which is above is like that which is below. The material is linked to the spiritual. Each one of us has an inner – a spiritual garden. As pilgrims we have only to knock in order to be admitted. Once admitted we must work to cultivate that inner paradise. Some of us care for the rose and others for the lotus. It matters little. The essential is that we tend the flower blooming within. Only then, when we are proven to be good guardians, shall we be given the key. I shall be forever thankful to Swamiji for showing me how to care for flowers and to become a good gardener. Through his help and God's grace someday I shall be given the key. I hope that I shall be able to carry back with me to the heart of Europe a few embers of Swamiji's divine flame.

—*Zdena Bronislavska, Czechoslovakia*

Impressions of a yoga convention

Swamiji's chanting of *Om* before stating his lessons is so forceful that it filled the entire atmosphere in the pandal with currents of ananda and prakash infusing the delegates, with light divine which in a great way was pushing them up towards the path of yoga. That sound still resounds in my

ears giving me a great blissful feeling and sensation both inside and outside. Swamiji used to close his lessons exactly at the fixed time being very punctual to the minute.

Swamiji's expression was unyielding and thunderous whenever the matter of principle and discipline came up and he would not budge an inch or show any leniency. On the other hand, whenever the question of kindness was there he was tender like a lotus flower, wrapped in saffron-coloured robe in magnificent graceful manner and style. Swamiji very much looked as if a shining star had come out from above to show the right path to the world which is very much plunged in darkness and misery these days.

—*Sri Kapilnath Seth*
Editor Yogapath, Lakhimpur Kheri

The Bihar School of Yoga

I attended the 3rd International Convention of Yoga in Munger from 1st to 7th November 1966. It was a unique event in many ways, well organized, well arranged and surcharged with spiritual atmosphere, rarely witnessed. The moving spirit and driving force behind this achievement was Swami Satyananda Maharaj, whose magnetic personality made such a deep impact on my mind that I was drawn towards him irresistibly, and a strong desire and urge aroused to be with him and near him for having further glimpses of this great saint. This is how I shook off my heavy business engagements, took the first opportunity, joined the 19th and the last fifteen-day session of the school and reached Munger on 15th December and stayed up to the 30th.

The spiritual, mental and physical enjoyment I have had during this short stay cannot be expressed in words. It gave new direction and made me make some determined resolves for the rest of my life. The central figure and the pivot of this dynamic institution, Swami Satyananda Maharaj is a man of rare qualities seldom witnessed in men of his stature. Many outstanding qualities are centred in one single individual.

He is an intellectual giant, a man of very high spiritual attainments, a philosopher, a great psychiatrist, physical culturist, and at the same time, a very lovable, affectionate and jovial companion. Whatever he preaches, he has literally translated into his own life. He sees himself in everybody and everybody in himself. Because of this great realization, he is fired with the spirit of selfless service and is engaged in the gigantic task of uplifting the suffering humanity. The emergence of this yoga institution is one such attempt towards that direction.

This institution is the first and one of its own kind established in India for the propagation of this great yogic culture, which is the only remedy for the great mental, moral and physical ills we are suffering from. Besides asana and pranayama, directions for meditation and higher practices of kriya yoga are also taught. Any deserving person can get anything he wants from Swamiji, who is ever ready to give away whatever he knows, most liberally and generously. I can say from personal experience that what I learnt about spirituality in these fifteen days I could not do up to the age of sixty-four that I am today. The personal behaviour of Swamiji is so educative, so instructive, so inspiring and penetrating that whosoever comes in contact with him is bound to be effected. He is extremely simple, humble and childlike, most unassuming, accessible to any and everybody, ever smiling and laughing. He is never tired of answering questions and replies to the queries of the sadhakas and is never seen annoyed or irritated. Although he has formally entrusted the work of giving instructions to the sadhakas to Swami Atmananda, his disciple, but he himself looks into every detail, even the menu of the kitchen, the cleanliness in the ashram and the requirements of every sadhaka in all respects. Every worker in the ashram is a devotee of Swamiji.

The whole ashram looks like a flower garden in full bloom, each face smiling, laughing, ever ready to serve each other and full of affection and love. During these fifteen days, not even once was an outburst of temper seen

or anybody in a complaining attitude. Everything is fully disciplined and well arranged. Punctuality to a minute is the law of the ashram. The timings of the food at the ashram are 9.30 am in the morning and 4.30 pm in the evening. At 7.30 am and at 3 pm daliya water is given. The food is very simple and without spices. I and other companions in the ashram even in so short a time have immensely benefited from this change, and our minds have been thinking to change our food habits. About sixty persons who attended the fifteen-day course did shankhaprakshalana under the direct guidance of Sri Swamiji Satyananda Maharaj. It benefited everybody. In my own case it worked a miracle. I used to get four to five motions a day during the last fifteen or twenty years. This trouble has completely vanished and I am now getting only one good motion in the morning. I was overweight and have reduced considerably, which is also a very welcome change.

In short the benefits – mental, spiritual and physical – that have accrued to me and my other associates in this session are too numerous to mention. Each one left the institution with some change according to their receptivity. The institution is rendering most invaluable service to the cause of humanity and its dynamic head Sri Swami Satyananda Maharaj, who is untiringly devoting all his energies for this great movement of spreading the yoga culture, is going to be the Man of the Era. My humblutions to this great saint of our times.

—Moolraj Anand
Director, Yoga Health Department,
Bharat Sewak Samaj, New Delhi

1968

Introduction

Extracts

A few years ago, a sannyasi was on the move across the length and breadth of India. Simple, unassuming, but full of dignity, he was scanning the skies and feeling the pulse of the people to see if the time had come for him to implant an idea – the idea of ‘Yoga for the Millions’. This sannyasi was a dreamer of dreams and this one was a pet dream of his. Like all men of vision, there was a strange restlessness in him ever on the move to give his idea a concrete shape. Wherever he went he declared, “Yoga is the culture of tomorrow.” With his dynamism, his great powers of organization and his magnetic personality, the sannyasi, Paramhansa Satyananda Saraswati, soon gathered around him a faithful band of dedicated workers, the chief among whom was Ma Yogashakti, formerly a well-known social worker, an educationist and a front rank politician. Thus was born the International Yoga Fellowship movement. This was followed by the establishment of the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger, and the hitherto secret treasure of yoga now became available for all to share. Spiritual seekers from far and wide soon began to take the pilgrim path to Munger, to return to their native soil, renewed in body, mind and spirit.

Who is this Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati? He is a sannyasi of many parts. Many and varied are his accomplishments – poet, writer, linguist, scholar, speaker, psychologist, organizer, to name a few. But above all he is a great yogi, and draws people like a magnet. Of him, many of his followers would say, the tender words of Mirabai, “He tied me with the string of the slenderest thread. In whatever direction he pulls, I am his.” While others, less sentimental, would utter what was uttered about another master in another age.

“When we listen to anyone else talking, however eloquent he is, we don’t really care what he says, but when we listen to you, we’re absolutely staggered and bewitched. We have been bitten in the heart, or the mind, or whatever you like to call it.”

—*H.K. Chavda*

Day-to-day report of the Fourth International Yoga Convention held at Gondia

From 1st to 7th November 1967

Swamiji Chidanandaji, smiled and said, “Many things have happened since those old days in Gurudev’s ashram. My dear Gurubhai, Swami Satyanandaji, has risen in spiritual stature, and I do not know whether I have to transmit spiritual current or whether I should receive it from him.

I bring love and greetings to you from the abode of our master. It is a wonderful experience to see the spiritual ideas of our holy master being actualized in this glorious form – an experience I have been having since I first met my revered and beloved spiritual brother, Swami Satyanandaji, after ten years in January 1966, at Bihar School of Yoga. This experience has been enlarged upon, after the last function at Munger, and reaches great joy here. Gurudev has in Swami Satyanandaji a brilliant replica in his spiritual aura and ability to communicate his vision, his enthusiasm and his urge to serve all those who come in contact with him. This

ability Gurudev had in a wonderful manner and to see it at present working in Swami Satyananda is a rare happiness which I would not miss for anything in the world.”

And finally, let me awaken, O Lord, in a world of saints and sages and swamis; in a world where all men good and true will be known as Satyanandajis, and that these will be found everywhere, and not only in Munger and Gondia. In such a world, Let me awaken! Amen!

—*M.D. Japheth*

Taming the kundalini

A bundle of letters from guru to shishya

Every seeker of spiritual enlightenment should read this book. It is a remarkable document showing how a spiritual preceptor leads his disciple firmly yet with touching tenderness and overflowing love through the dark and trackless desert of life to the land of splendour and glory. With lucidity, characteristic of Swami Satyananda’s epistolary style and soothing warmth of expression, this book makes fascinating reading.

—*Editor*

An utmost necessity of a guru for spiritual life

In the end, I prostrate myself before my guru, Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who has the splendour of wisdom, and by whose grace my whole family and many thousands have become happy and have gained spiritual upliftment.

—*Dara D. Karkaria. BSc, Bombay*

Paramahansa Sri Satyananda Saraswati

A newcomer to Munger had been told that the city boasted a holy man. Being of a religious turn of mind, the newcomer was keen to see the saint and betook himself to the holy man's ashram. As he entered, he saw a slightly built, youthful looking sannyasi, engaged in cleaning the drains and making a thorough job of it. The newcomer asked, "Maharaj, where could I see Paramahansa Satyanandaji?" The sannyasi, with a broad smile, said, "You are speaking to him. Come, would you like to have a look at our school of yoga?" The newcomer had expected to see someone of venerable age, solemn faced and surrounded by devotees, but his disappointment was only temporary. Soon he realized that he was in the presence of a radiant personality, full of wisdom, but light of heart, soft-spoken and putting one and all completely at ease.

The above incident illustrates the paradox what Paramahansa Satyananda is.

—H.K. Chavda

Paramahansa Swami Satyananda

Most of us had the proud privilege, the opportunity and the good fortune of hearing the most illuminating elevating and thought-provoking discourses of a mighty man, an intellectual giant, a realized soul and a master-mind in the person of Swami Satyananda Maharaj.

I had the good fortune of coming in contact with Swami Satyananda on 1st November 1966 at the time of the Third International Convention. Thereafter, I attended the fifteen-day course from 16th to 31st December 1966. In the year 1967, I saw glimpses of him at the Fourth International Yoga Convention in Gondia. This little contact has transformed my life and given me a good drive. The enthusiasm with which I have tried to translate his teachings have benefited me beyond my expectations. I had a lot of physical and mental debility which has completely vanished. Today at the

age of sixty-six I find myself at least twenty years younger. I do not claim myself to be a perfectly healthy man, but I can say with confidence that I am many times better than many of my age. The first test of fitness is the endurance of hard work. I work without fatigue fifteen to sixteen hours a day. I am active and kicking at this age. I have reduced fifty-five lbs. in weight and six inches of my belly. The most intricate asanas which I could never think of doing I am able to do with perfect ease and comfort. This is also due to the blessings of Swamiji and the perseverance, patience and determination he has infused into my being.

My contact with Swamiji is very little but what matters most is the receptivity of an individual. We must learn this great lesson from the seed. When the seed is put into the soil and covered with all the dirt, it doesn't get disturbed. Even from that darkness it draws light and comes into the world giving flowers and fruit.

Swamiji is going abroad and carrying the torch of light to every corner of the world. I pay my respectful homage to this great saint of the East and wish him all success in this great uphill task.

—*Moolraj Anand*

The dynamic saint as I see him

Swami Satyananda Saraswati is a veritable spiritual gem of incalculable merit. In my knowledge, he is the youngest living saint, who is a dynamic karma yogi. He is gifted with wonderful abilities. He is an embodiment of simplicity, truth, serenity and egolessness. He is radiant with all the virtues of a great saint. Perfect desirelessness, unrivalled selflessness and absolute egolessness gave him the unique place among the great saints. He has well moulded his life and is always on the look out for moulding the others. He is a karma yogi of the highest calibre. He is the master of giving the best wisdom from the Vedas, *Gita* and several other soul stirring religious books. He believes in practical training.

He is a person of silent endurance, humility coupled with dynamism, zeal, tireless industry and the true spirit of dedication. He has one-pointed application to the task he undertakes.

Swamiji has great devotion for his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. He is firmly convinced that every bit of work connected with the ashram or public life, is nothing but guru seva. He disciplined his mind and tongue perfectly. He was a great pillar of the Divine Life Society of Swami Sivananda, his guru.

Beloved Swamiji is a saint with a great mission. His mission is to construct a community of persons whose culture is yogic, their activities and modes of life are governed by the laws of yogic discipline and by the essential knowledge of yoga. His mission is a source of divine contentment to him. He earnestly wishes parents to realize the necessity of yogic discipline for the young generation to ensure a clean atmosphere in their minds and society. In one of his spiritual books, *Satyam Speaks*, he says, “A guru does not merely help his child in a spiritual way only, but his help can be commanded – yes, not requested but commanded at every step of life. You can ask for my help and advice at any time for anything. This is my duty, my mission. I shall be thrice blessed, if I can help those who need and seek. I know that sometimes a little sincere guidance from the one, who understands, can destroy many self-invited frustrations and remove the imaginary layer of weakness in a man and bring out to light, the power that is there in every soul.” Really, how great is his mission for the welfare of mankind.

—Sri Dara D. Karkaria

1969

Guru and disciple, eternal twins of creation

Extract

Finally there are gurus, who are directed by higher consciousness. They live in inspiration and are aware of the workings of all the levels of consciousness. They know the role each disciple is to play in the 'divine leela' and act as the divine director helping others to learn of their role and preparing them to execute that role in a perfect way. One such guru is my inspiration, Paramahansa Swami Satyananda.

Gurudeva Satyananda has simple disciples, such as an ex-communist, a barber, a housewife, a teenager, a child, a typist, a farmer, a village girl, a teacher, a shopkeeper, a goldsmith, a clerk. They are the foundation stones of his mission, destined to play different roles in it, as did the Apostles of Christ.

—*Swami Brahmananda Saraswati*

Saints come to cut away the bondage of birth and rebirth

Extract

The saints do not need our body, our wealth or our mind for themselves. There is no limit to their generosity. They descend to the earth plane to give and not to take. They suffer the pains and sufferings of the flesh and of human existence for the sake of humanity. They come on a Mission of Mercy. They are the King of Kings.

Such is the great mission of beloved Gurudeva Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati who is the divine messenger of God.

—Dara D. Karkaria





Yoga 1970s



1971

A devotee's hymn – a disciple's prayer

Without you there will be no sunshine shooting
its sparkling gold along the heavens,

Without you flowers will lose their fragrance,
and the soft cooling breeze
will kiss them no longer to sleep,

Without you the glistening morning diamonds
will no longer rest on their bed of leaves,
bathing in the sunshine,

Without you the showering rains will play
with the fish in the oceans no more.

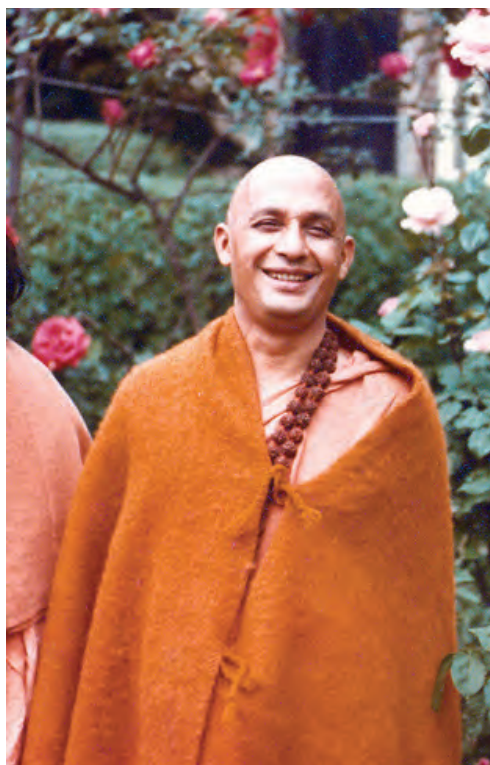
Without you the winds and the clouds will stop
their wild games, their passions will die, the thunder
and lightening won't illumine the sky any longer.

Without you the grass won't be green, the sea
won't be blue and the sand won't be yellow,
the birds will stop singing their morning songs.

For without you there will be no me.
You are the Sun, and I am the golden rays.
You are the breeze,
and I am a thousand fragrances carried along.
You are the storms, and I am the clouds,
playing their eternal game of love and life,
circling around each other,
sometimes laughing, sometimes crying,
sometimes flying high, sometimes falling down.

But I know that each time I fall,
You'll reach out a hand and pick me up.

—*Swami Satya Vivekananda Saraswati*



1973

Satyananda Pushpanjali

Ananda Swaroop Revered Swami Satyanandaji,
Born on 26th August 1923, to be the foremost disciple of Sat
Guru Sivanandji,
Caring not for the triple pleasures of this mundane life,
Dedicated everything to delight in the eternal life.
Early in his teens tried to uproot his life's delusion,
Found in life's goal in Swami Sivananda's Divine Mission,

Grinding his life with the weapon of perfect purity,
Has become a selfless karma yogi to sport in reality,
I bow to thee Brahma jnani, on thy kamala pada,
Just to receive thy sacred asirvada.
Kindle in me the fire of spirituality.
Lead me on towards the path of divinity.
Make me to rest in abode of sat-chit-ananda,
Nearer to the Lord will I reach revered Swami Satyananda,

Om Namah Shivaya is my divine heritage,
Pour thy blessings to attain the heavenly prestige,
Quickly will I be able to attain the divine perfection,
Remembering thy divine and holy instruction,
Surely thou wilt find me Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji's
worthy disciple,

Turning my mind to the Divine Life message to tear the
maya triple,
Using every second to become one with Brahma,
Verily by thy blessings I will put an end to my trifle karma,
Wasting not the precious time of this human birth,
X'mas message of Swami Sivanandaji will put an end to my
rebirth,
You, to Swami Satyanandaji, I surrender,
Zeal and earnestness is my motto to cut the knot of avidya
asunder.

—*Editor*

Japa: its grandeur, its requisites, its efficiency

Extract

The heart's reflection is a creative power. Not only thought, feeling and breath must be associated, they must become one to form what we call the authority. We must be – in what we are concerned – our own authority. Christ has always spoken with authority. At the feet of Swami Satyanandaji, we are permeated – I personally feel – in the magnetic aura of the purest, of the most perfect individualization of the authority.

—*Madhumati, Belgium*



1974

The Guru

Without you there is no fragrance in the flower.
Without you there is no rain in the clouds.
Without you there is no peace in heaven.
O God beautiful, O God beautiful.
At thy feet O I do bow.
In the mountains thou art highest,
In the rivers thou art Ganges,
In the seas thou art oceans,
In the music thou art tune,
In the Gods thou art Indra,
In the Swami's thou art Yogi,
In the Yogi's thou art Satyam,
In the Yogi's thou art Shiva,
O God beautiful, O God beautiful.
At thy feet O I do bow.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

My guru, the purpose and guidance of my life

Guru Poornima, 4 July 1974

Every human being needs guidance and a purpose in his life. Usually we try to find our purpose in the worldly things but they are always incapable of fulfilling that need. Every time we think that our new 'toy' is going to be the 'real' purpose of our existence and that our search will come to an end. However, it always turns out to be a deception and our search continues for the next 'real' reason for our lives.

The situation is no better when we look for guidance which we try to find in our so-called friends who are just as blind as we are or worse. Sometimes we decide to become our own guides only to be guided by our own egoism and ignorance.

I, as any ordinary human being, was also in the same predicament and doing the same search. All my searching ended one unforgettable afternoon in June of 1971 when I first met personally my guru Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati. At that time he was making his first trip to South America accompanied by a swami who was going to be our guide at Satyanandashram in Bogota, Swami Amritananda Saraswati.

Finding Paramahansa Swamiji finally gave the desired purpose and guidance to my life. To serve him, and through him our fellowmen is the loftiest purpose any individual is able to find; a purpose which at the same time helps others and is one of the fastest ways to advance on our spiritual path.

There are few living masters in the world who can provide the guidance that Paramahansa Swami Satyananda gives to all who are willing to receive it. He has realized in himself the truths and techniques of the sciences of yoga and tantra and thus fulfils the requirements for being a true guide. He fully understands both the Eastern and Western mind making comprehensible to both the yoga principles and practices. The training of the mind in the

West makes usually inaccessible many of the teachings of great Indian masters, but this does not happen with Paramahansa Swamiji's teachings. They are perfectly geared for the understanding of the Western mind, taking into consideration all environmental circumstances of our culture.

Life has become meaningful and easier, having a definite path, ever since that unforgettable afternoon in Bogota when the reason for my birth was fulfilled. Many things are yet to be learned, but every day with the help of Swamiji Paramahansa and Swami Amritananda we advance one step on the path of spiritual development.

—Ignacio Copete, Bogota, Colombia



1977

Acceptance

Extract

How can we not be free when we are under such a perfect master. There is no doubt that he will help us to free ourselves from the tensions and tears which are really aching in our hearts as we carry on with day-to-day life: sitting, working, sleeping, eating, thinking. That is why Swamiji is here. Not just to give us a lecture, not just to teach us prana vidya or nadi shodhana breathing or pawanmuktasana part one to move our toes. What Swamiji is offering is something which is the real need for our life. It is what we need, and we are learning more day by day.

Swamiji is here to free our painful hearts, not only to teach pawanmuktasana. You can go to Satyananda Ashram or any other yoga school to learn pawanmuktasana; there are many teachers everywhere, but this is not what Swamiji offers. There is no ordinary yoga teacher who can give you what Swamiji has because it is not physical, it is not mental, it is not psychic, it is not emotional. It is beyond all this, and Swamiji is moving us towards it as we purify ourselves through different methods.

—*Swami Akhandananda Saraswati*
Satyanandashram, Mangrove Mountain, Australia

Unforgettable fortnight

Extract

Asthma is not a killer disease, but for me it was a wasting disease. My brother, an ardent admirer of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, told me that Swami Satyananda was doing a great job of uplifting the jaded spirits and the moribund health of those who flocked to him through a network of ashrams scattered all over India, and referred my predicament to him. A few days later we received a reply from the Bihar School of Yoga informing me to proceed to the ashram at Rajnandgaon.

More than a month has elapsed since my return to the daily stress and strains of urban life in Trivandrum. Till this moment I have had no recurrence of asthmatic trouble. The tranquil air of Rajnandgaon seems to have blessed me with a new life, free from a supposedly incurable disease.

I cannot adequately thank Swami Satyananda and his associates for all they have done in rejuvenating my health and arousing my morale. Their mission of ministering to the sick and sagging spirits through their ashrams is a great solace to humanity.

—*B.K. Parameswaran Nair*

Thank you

Extract

Having suffered from asthma for the last three to four years, I decided to take yoga classes at the Sambalpur ashram in Orissa. Last Guru Poornima, I met you in Raigarh (MP) and also in Sambalpur. I am doing asanas and pranayamas as advised by you. Last year, I had only three asthma attacks. Since 16 November 1976, I have not had an attack thanks to your blessing.

—*Letter by Sri Mahadev Misra*
Executive Engineer, Balangir Irrigation Division, Bolangir

Divine contract

Extract

My guru has never spared the rod and spoilt me with praise. Many times he has beaten me in public, sometimes for mistakes, sometimes for no apparent reason at all. But his harsh words have made me tough. If he threatens me he is challenging my weak mind, if he beats me he is breaking my inflexible will, and if he kicks me he is clearing away the ignorance that blinds my vision. Once my guru hit me till I lay face down in the mud crying, but I saw tears in his eyes, for in punishing me he suffered more than I did.

In many silent and unknown ways my guru has saved and supported me at uncertain moments of my life. It was my guru's blessings that protected me when I lived for six years in a troubled city amidst violence and gunfire. While homes all around were gutted by bombs and even the walls of my ashram were pierced by bullets, the house remained safe.

When I first came to my guru I was a foolish young girl, drawn by an undefined attraction and a simple desire to be near him. I used to sit in his class and chant *Om* louder and longer than everyone else to make him notice me. I followed him from town to town on his travels, but although I loved him, I hated the idea of becoming a sannyasin. By force my guru dyed my clothes orange and shaved my head. My resistance was feeble when confronted by the power of his loving will.

My guru can do what he likes with me, for I am his. My only sadhana and my only resolve are to obey him more. I do not care whether he loves me or not, whether he blesses me or not. I pray that he abuses me, hurts me and rejects me. Only I want him in my heart. He is my mother, father, husband and companion. I do not need to massage his feet or sing his name aloud to prove my devotion, for I have kept him inside and closed my ears, eyes, nose and mouth so tightly that he cannot escape, nor can anyone else get in.

Guruji, I pray that I may be reborn in every species and every form to serve and repay you, for this lifetime is not sufficient.

—*Swami Atmananda Saraswati*

Guru seva

Extract

A guru can draw people to him from all parts of the world. Those who come to see Swami Satyananda at the Bihar School of Yoga may have different backgrounds, needs and desires, but the one thing they all have in common is their attraction to the guru. Swamiji does not call these people to him because he wants something from them, rather he has something to give to them: a teaching, an experience, some work, a mantra, a cure, a realization, some advice or warning.

—*Swami Gaurishankara Saraswati*



1978

Editorial

During the last half of the 20th century a child was born whose coming the whole world had awaited throughout the ages. The child was named Scientific Yoga. The child's mother was of the East, her name was Tantra. The child's father was of the West, his name was Science. During their courtship they developed a great respect for each other, and in their union a golden sun began to rise over the dark ocean of the minds of men.

Three wise men gathered in the sun's warming rays. The first was a yogi who had renounced world and family many years ago and set out on an inner pilgrimage to find the kingdom of God. Surrounded by disciples, he was renowned for his clarity of vision and the dynamic nature of his teaching. For his compassion and sound advice, many souls sought his darshan.

A student's experience in yoga

Finally, a friend inspired me to take up yoga under the guidance of Swami Satyananda Saraswati. I am proud to have spent a fortnight in his ashram and give thanks to Allah for providing me with such a great guru. I am no longer anxious and depressed and I feel that my lost confidence and purpose in life have been fully restored. Through ashram

life, plenty of karma yoga (hard work in service of the guru) and other techniques such as antar mouna and yoga nidra, the mental conflicts which were causing me so much guilt have been neutralized.

For me, this was the best cure for insomnia and nervous tension, and I am sure that I could not have received better treatment and advice from any clinic. May thousands of people be helped and inspired by the guru as I have been. Asanas and pranayamas are essential, but to get personal guidance from Swamiji is even more important.

—*Mohammed Aftab Alam*





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1980

Book Review: *Sure Ways to Self-Realization*

This book represents the keen and wide study of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the spiritual guide for millions of seekers all over the world. He has gathered here diverse systems of meditation found in every culture and in every religion and by stringing them together makes it evident that a thread of similarity links all meditation techniques. Meditation is practised by people for realization of the supreme. If through this publication Swamiji is able to kindle the divine spark that lies hidden in the heart of every man, he shall have achieved his object and fulfilled the mission of his life.

—*Lion K.V. Govinda Rao,*
Editor Wisdom magazine, Madras

1981

Yoga therapy – ashram experience

Extract

Yoga reflects the legacy of a wise, ancient civilization. Researchers have only scratched the surface of this knowledge, trying to fathom its breadth and depth through the instruments of science.

Here at the Bihar School of Yoga, we have had the privilege of working under the guidance of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, a master architect of yoga. His simple, practical methods have alleviated many modern-day ailments while increasing the individual's latent spiritual energy.

Using this system, we have helped many people with complaints ranging from tension and digestive disorders to problems of epilepsy, hypertension, diabetes, asthma and even cancer, thereby supporting the work of others in the field.

Our approach is a combination of medicine and yoga expertise. This reduces gross suffering and maintains stability in the lifestyle, until yogic techniques can ease the body into a more functional state, where cure can be achieved. In all cases, yoga serves to relax and de-stress the patient so that medical techniques can work even more efficiently. Currently, there are several investigations under way in clinical settings, medical schools and ashrams around

the world, all under the inspiration and guidance of Swami Satyananda. It appears that yoga is an exceptionally powerful approach, which can be successfully applied even in chronic and incurable cases.

—*Dr Swami Shankardevananda Saraswati, Australia*

Report on the seminar in Chamarande

Extract

Situated outside of Paris, amidst the scenic splendour of a large, natural park is the site of Chamarande, a new Yogic University, which hosted Swami Satyananda Saraswati last September. Chamarande is a federation of yoga groups formed with the specific aim of promoting a new lifestyle in which ecology, biological agriculture, healthy diet, natural medicine, artistic expression and, of course, yoga are combined in a natural setting of rare beauty.

Chamarande is a kind of big ashram with no particular master, creed, or religion attached. It is open to all, and anyone can conduct a seminar here provided his aims and ideals coincide with the principles set up by its founders. The future of Chamarande has been clearly defined by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, who has compared it with Shantiniketan, the university of Tagore, where classes are given under the trees and all kinds of arts and crafts are taught along with other subjects. In the same way, Chamarande will become a European University of Yoga where yoga teachers from all over the continent will, in the course of time, be able to come and be instructed in all the various scriptures by great scholars and masters. There will be a large library and research centre where people can investigate all aspects of yoga and tantra as well as the other spiritual sciences, but yoga will not be the only subject taught and practised. There should be a microcosm of activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance. Healing and yoga will become the central motif, the nucleus of all these activities.

Swamiji clearly visualized all this while we were having our satsangs and lectures in the open air under the green trees, with birds flying overhead. On these occasions, we all felt that we, as students, and he, as a great master, belonged to an eternal present. Transmission was given over to us in this immemorial setting.

During the one week seminar, Swamiji wanted us to live with him as much as possible in a relaxed way. He could often be seen in the park, in the hall, on the lawn, and we were able to stop and converse with him. We had two classes a day outside in different scenic places. Early in the morning Swami Amritananda conducted a class of meditation and in the afternoon Swami Yogamudrananda gave yoga nidra. We enjoyed two satsangs per day with Swami Satyananda, translated by Swami Yogabhakti. During these satsangs Swamiji showed that every question could be tackled in a way which revealed the permanent wisdom of yoga and tantra and their relevance to our everyday life. Swamiji also gave private interviews and mantra diksha to many of us.

The focus of the seminar on natural transmission confused many participants. The French people are used to asking a lot of questions and wanted to have analytical explanations about yoga. You get this type of course very easily in the west, as there are plenty of excellent, high standard yoga teachers. So, at the beginning they expected Swami Satyananda to be nothing more than a super yoga teacher. Soon, however, they realized that knowledge is not only learned with a pencil in hand, but that there is something more important than words passing through the lips. There is the unheard speech that goes directly to the heart and it is called transmission.

This treasure was disclosed to an eager audience of seventy yoga teachers. These will undoubtedly form the core of the French groups to come to Munger for further training in 1981. From now on the presence of Swamiji will be expected by a growing group of French yogis.

The seeds of this seminar have taken root within the heart of the participants and they are looking forward to meeting Swamiji again. The people who had the privilege of joining this seminar all say that it has been the changing point in their spiritual life. This unique experience has matured and enabled them to continue their practices at a new level, in a different light.

—*Swami Animananda Saraswati (Catherine Couvreur), France*

A glimpse into the life at the Bihar School of Yoga

Extract

Whenever you decide to tour India, do not neglect to visit the Bihar School of Yoga. But before that, you must make a firm resolve to abandon your ego, that is, the internal and external person who has been completely degraded by habits and concepts that are cheap and miserable, dishonest and false. At the final legs of your journey, the realization will suddenly come to you that in the ashram there will be nothing to remind you of your old style of life and way of thinking.

Once you arrive at the Bihar School of Yoga you will meet with one surprise after another. It will bring you a new feeling of another world, of another community of people that maybe you have heard of or read about, but you have not yet seen and most important, not yet experienced. Immediately you will realize that without any special effort, without any ostentation, you are being led from ignorance to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. No exaggeration. You wonder: How is it possible that these people are living here in such a small and limited space such a peaceful and simple lifestyle, sleeping on wooden beds, on rough mattresses, using oil lamps? At the same time they possess such real simplicity, such overflowing understanding and inconceivable solidarity.

The sannyasins are mostly young people, boys and girls, and they apply themselves to daily life with steadiness and seriousness. With their shaven heads, bare feet and geru dhotis like the ancient Greek robes, they, cast off the inequality of the male and female roles which has caused so much suffering.

How I wish all the young students could see this way of life that has no relation to that imported behaviour which is found elsewhere. There is absolutely no doubt that all these boys and girls who have found their life's meaning in yoga are facing the future with confidence, optimism and hope. As for the modernized youth of today and the hordes of the unemployed, I would like them to come and be exposed to this other way of life, even if they don't actually live it. It would not be necessary to try to convince them of its benefits; it would be enough just to present an alternative.

They would become acquainted with that new world that originates from yoga and that heralds a hopeful spring for the tortured people of this century, who have seen two world wars and constant terrorism. That spiritual rather than materialistic rebirth, which has been longed for and sought after by all beings on Earth, is becoming a reality through the illuminated spiritual guidance of Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Swamiji has distilled the essence of traditional sannyasa and made it possible for new-age seekers to follow this ancient path. He is attracting more and more young people around him. He is friendly and he listens to them, he discusses things with them, he advises them and he shows them the right, true and real path in life. This is the same path which he himself has trod and which has brought him to self-realization.

Faithful and devoted disciples who have been following him for years are today transmitting the light, and putting into practice that knowledge which he himself has transferred to them. This yogic knowledge originated thousands of years ago, and the awareness of its purpose

and potential has developed and been lost many times throughout history in various parts of the world. Today, through the teaching of Swami Satyananda, the barriers of time and distance have been overcome and yoga has regained all its original power and freshness, to become a living and contemporary science.

—Dr Demetrios Stylianos Goutas, University of Athens, Greece



1982

Prayer of initiation

Oh eternal light,
let me have a glimpse of your grandeur.
Oh eternal fire,
burn down my phoenix self.
Oh eternal sound,
overwhelm me with your thunder
Oh eternal fragrance,
transport me to the garden of paradisial roses.
Oh eternal nectar,
quench my soul's thirst
Oh eternal beauty,
transform me into a channel of your creative force.
Oh eternal love,
absorb my little wave in your boundless ocean.
Oh eternal truth,
reveal thyself to my wondering eyes.
Oh beloved master,
let me rest at last at the haven of your lotus feet.

—*Swami Satyavedananda Saraswati, Greece*

My experience at the Bihar School of Yoga

Extract

The ashram is not a place of rigid rules and regulations. All you need to do is follow the practices and see what happens. At the end of a three-week stay I felt no urge for alcohol and cigarettes, even though I had been habituated to both before my arrival. In fact, I felt light and rested, as if I was almost floating in the air. I am certain that if I continue with my practices the urge for alcohol and cigarettes will completely disappear, in a natural manner.

My experience was that the practices were aimed at enhancing awareness of one's body and mind and bringing one down from intellectual preoccupation to heartfelt sincerity. The classes are spontaneous, without rigidity of structure or learning by the book method. The courses cover your whole wellbeing, from a total perspective, rather than from the usual isolated medical viewpoint. I found that Swami Satyananda is not merely a great yoga teacher in the sense usually understood. He is a spiritual guru whose method is yoga. His yoga is total, all-encompassing and multidimensional.

—A.K. Lakhanpal, Bombay

Kevali

The people ask,
“What is he like?”
Like nothing.
Like sun and moonshine on the water
Rippled from breezes at dawn and eve,
And deep
To the heart's standstill.
A pure reflection of golden hue
Seen a long time ago
Yet still to be seen,

Known in the heart
And in sleep and dream.
Oh Paramahansa, my Guru
You are my Ramakrishna,
My shining Kali, black Shivalingam,
Any towered temple.
The serpent winds
Around your changing form.
You are a great tiger.
You have a whip in your tongue,
Cutting out the lies.
Oh, Master of Surrender
You are my little child,
My most beloved one.

—Rodhi Biswas, *Italy*

Experience in yoga

Extract

My basic trouble is that I was born with a spina bifida, which damaged the nerve controlling the muscles of the feet. I have grown up with these problems, but a few years ago I began to feel ill which was rare for me. A fibroid tumour was eventually diagnosed and a hysterectomy performed in December 1976. The medical profession continued to do its best for me and some problems were solved, but I continued to feel ill. Life became a bore.

I would unaccountably suffer abdominal pains or attacks of what I could only describe as ‘internal distress’. This state of affairs continued until May 1980 when a friend said she was sure yoga could help me. As she had talked to me about yoga before, I begged her to give me a lesson during her brief visit. She did and promised to send me a book when she got home. Some weeks later, Swami Satyananda’s book *Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha* arrived. My only ambition at this time was to strengthen

my back, but I was intrigued by the possibility of additional benefits. With the blessing of consultants and a local doctor I got started.

In the firm belief that I must follow the instructions to the letter if I were to give the book a fair trial, I rose at 6 am, went into the spare bedroom and lay down in front of an open window with the book on the floor in front of me. In these early days, I practised the asanas very, very slowly and carefully, obeying all the instructions to the last detail and, miraculously it seemed to me, everything claimed in the introduction to the backward bending asanas was true. Not only did the back muscles become stronger, but that terrible feeling of 'internal distress' began to go. So immediate were the benefits of the three asanas I performed consecutively every day (bhujangasana, ardha shalabhasana and sarpasana) that my one desire on waking each morning was to get into the spare room and practise them. I felt better every day.

It is now November 1981 and I have not once missed my morning yoga since the book arrived from Australia in July 1980. I dare not as I am convinced that its effects are both remedial and preventative. I boast loudly and at some length, to anyone interested, about the virtues of Swami Satyananda's book and the miraculous improvement that yoga has wrought in me. I cannot imagine that I will ever meet Swami Satyananda, much as I would wish to, but I hope that he reads this because it is my 'thank-you' to him.

—C.E.F., Gloucester, England

1983

A colonel's trip to Ganga Darshan

Extract

I decided to visit the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, and spend a few days at the new hilltop ashram Ganga Darshan. Besides the warm welcome received upon arrival, I noticed that the whole place was fragrant with Swami Satyananda's physical presence. I saw a lot of activity in progress. The weather was pleasant as the rains had just set in and, of course, Ganga was ever attractive.

To get into the ashram routine, I went to bed early that night and had a luxurious sleep after the daylong road journey. Next morning, after the morning therapy class and breakfast, I had the pleasure of meeting with Swamiji who, with his inimitable approach, at once put me at ease. This helped me immensely in settling down to the routine of Ganga Darshan.

Some of my friends in the army came to meet Swamiji. It was an interesting session wherein he advised the simple soldiers to be practical karma yogis.

At Ganga Darshan the whole atmosphere is permeated by laughing, joking sannyasins, young and old, all living in the spirit of the Lord under the holy guidance of Swamiji. I was on a different feeling level from the moment I arrived and was hoping that my stay there would not come to an

end. The Bihar School of Yoga is in this world yet out of this world. Ganga Darshan is a must for all times. There are all kinds of activities going on to complete this monumental development. It is a challenging task but the spirit of Swamiji is always there, permeating every undertaking.

In my last meeting with Swamiji, before taking leave from Ganga Darshan, he uttered the following words, which still ring in my ears today, “Happiness is more important than life.”

—Colonel O.P. Kohli, Calcutta

The harmonious flow

Extract

1983 heralds in new dimensions and horizons for the Bihar School of Yoga. Building an institution is in itself a mammoth task, but to find suitable successors to uphold the high ideals and standards, is no less important. Right from its inception, Swami Satyananda has played the dual role of guru and administrator. Two roles diametrically opposite or contradictory to each other, which led him into many difficulties from time to time, and which he survived with unsurpassable skill. Let me explain this further.

We are all familiar with the role of a guru. He inspires, instructs and is the guiding light to many lives. For those of you who have a guru, it is unthinkable to live this life without nurturing that relationship. It is tantamount to having no eyes to see or ears to hear, but have you ever stopped to wonder how a guru meets the demands of his disciples. How is it that not just one or two or three or five, but thousands and millions of people all over the world are able to draw energy from that one source. It is obvious that he is able to delve into deeper and higher states of consciousness, where no duality exists, where he is able to sift the true from the untrue, the mundane and the gross experience from the pure experience. It is this ability which

allows him to deal with the problems of the people with accurate precision.

However, if at the same time, he also has to play the role of an administrator, it is necessary that from time to time he must return or come down to the practical, day-to-day affairs of life. So on the one hand he must go deep within, and on the other hand he must externalize that same consciousness. Of course this constant fluctuation, from higher to lower states of mind is not a trifling matter and not easily attainable. For one state of mind is not complementary to the other. Only a jivanmukta can do it with the utmost ease. Swami Satyananda has been the epitome of such a person. His decisions as administrator have been flawless and his guidance to the people illuminating.

How much longer must these demands press on him? Swamiji often jokingly says, "My life has been divided into twenty year cycles. I was born in 1923, I joined my Guru's ashram in 1943, I opened my ashram in 1963, and now in 1983 is the last turning point, I retire." When he sees the disappointed and disconsolate look on our faces, he always hastens to add, "When I say retire, I mean as an administrator, I shall continue to guide and inspire the people as long as I live."

—*Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati*

Double-edged blessings of the guru

With your left hand
Gently coaxing
And an occasional prod
You lifted me into bliss.
But in ignorance I started
To think I was a sage.
With every elevation of your hand
My pride increased
Until I thought

There was nothing
That 'I' could not do.
Then
With a mighty sweep
Of your right hand
You sent me sprawling
Into the depths of despair.
Gone was the bliss
Gone was the wisdom
And gone was the sense of achievement
Fallen from my pedestal
My ego shattered and squirming
What was there
That 'I' could do.
When my heart was humbled a little
You raised me again
With both hands
And gave me hope and blessings
With which to cross
This stormy ocean of the world.
Oh disciple, most sincere
Beware!
The Guru has two hands
One to inflate, and one to deflate
One to make, and one to break
And both are bestowers of his grace.
Reflect, Oh seeker,
That this world is not
A soft carpet of rose petals
Nor is it a bed of thorns.
It is a bit of both
And to reach
The spiritual sky above
We must learn
To endure all extremes
Good and bad
And also go beyond.

So remember always:
When you are being launched high in bliss
Or crashed to lowest abyss
That
The Guru's caress
Is as good as his slap
But can 'I' bear it?

—*Swami Nishchalananda Saraswati*

Editorial: Guru dakshina

Extract

As the wandering sadhu sat on the hillock, gazing at the broad expanse, a strange and awesome energy seemed to flow into him. This was the hill on which had stood the palace of the legendary Karna, eldest of the Pandavas, himself a Mahayogi, favourite of Shakti, to whom he offered worship every night. Here again the footsteps of Siddhartha, the Buddha, had echoed, sanctifying it with his compassion. Few know today that Munger was once a hallowed land. Not very far away was Ayodhya, the kingdom of Rama. Its sacred earth had felt the vibrations of avatars and yogis. Here too had come, this parivrajaka on his wanderings; Satyananda was his name.

As the energy flooded into him, revelations unfolded in front of his inner eye. His mission was clear. This manifestation of energy as visions he knew to be a darshan of prana the cosmic energy that in each individual flows in a path called the pingala nadi, surya nadi or the inner Ganga. The burden of knowledge lay heavy within and like a mother who yearns to give of herself to her children, he knew his destiny was now to stop and wait for his disciples. It was this vision and the realization of the inner Ganga that was the inspiration for an ashram, Ganga Darshan, where, in the years to come, he would train men and women to face life fully and totally. He knew they would come; tired of

their social identities, their desire for power, for wealth, and finding a surfeit of these and yet empty within themselves, they would seek him out.

Years had passed by. It was Guru Poornima. On the second day, one of the travellers asked at satsang, “What is dakshina? Why does a guru need dakshina?” Swami Satyananda raised his eyes to the audience. It was a look of deep understanding. The questioner was referring to the fact that disciples and devotees give money and material gifts to spiritual masters.

Perhaps Swamiji remembered the years of freedom when he had roamed as a parivrajaka, untrammelled by organizations or devotees pouring in, in hundreds, as they did today, each wanting to press his feet and apply tilak to his forehead. The years of personal freedom that he had renounced out of infinite compassion for the many suffering souls he had seen as he walked; even as the Buddha had spent his years after realization so he may bring solace to tormented hearts. If a guru had to transform the consciousness of his disciples where could he train them? How many who suffered could give up their attachment to bodily comforts and learn the lessons of life under trees and on hills as in the years of yore?

He had to come down in order to help. Knowing the limitations of people, Swamiji had built an ashram where they came to live a simple life – often grumbling and frequently criticizing the lack of comforts. Slowly as the flowers open in the spring, noiselessly, gently, unseen he stole into their hearts and, unknown to themselves, they realized that their attachment to luxuries had really been their limitation. They were quite at home with plain and simple living. When they left, they took this message back with them, to their families, to their communities. Unknown to them they had left behind a mental concept of feeling limited, and were freer within themselves. They did not know that the buildings were for them and not for him. The land was for them and not for him. For him it was enough to have ‘two dhotis and two rotis’.

He said smiling, “Dakshina is the disciple’s offering to the guru, the inner guru. The material gifts he gives are symbolic of the *ahamkara*, the limited identity of the disciple, which is the only thing the guru asks for, so he may leave it behind and grow into the limitlessness of the supreme. But how many know the way?”

As the crowds milled out they spoke to each other, “It was worth coming all this way. The inconveniences were nothing. One never appreciates something beautiful unless one suffers a little.” As the sweat rolled down their bodies in the sweltering heat of Bihar, they did not even notice an inner glow of beauty in themselves. They felt uplifted and forgot their difficulties.

As I saw the transformation in them I thought to myself, “The greatest guru dakshina offered that day was that by a quiet person who, having renounced all, sat and allowed his devotees to go through the motions of their pooja, heard their praises and criticisms, felt their tears, received their flowers and coins with equanimity. He surrendered his all at the innermost shrine of his devotees to the divinity in them so that they went away each carrying something precious according to their capacity, each feeling a certain love and beauty in themselves, a flow as if a lamp were lit. And many did not know the source’.

“O Rukmini,” said Krishna, “I run behind my devotees so that the dust of their feet may purify me.”

—Swami Dharmakirti Saraswati (Dr Usha Sundaram),
Bangalore

Experiences with Swamiji

Extract

As far as my experience with Swamiji goes, since entering the ashram I never thought of going out of it. From the moment of my arrival I was given a position close to Swamiji, but I never felt that I was locked in, or overwhelmed by this big

responsibility. I only thought that it was by his grace alone, that I had been given this privilege to serve him in this way. It was his choice, not my choice. I had no choice, whether I was given the duty of running a machine, cleaning, taking class or singing kirtan. Whatever he indicated to me that I should do, whatever he asked me to do, I did.

The experience I felt throughout these early days with Swamiji was that only by our own effort do we come to deserve and derive guru's grace. Of course, guru may be there, showering us with grace all the time, non-stop, but we only step forward when we make an effort. There is no other way to receive and to achieve the guru's grace, and grace is the key to open up the higher faculties.

Therefore, you can say that everyone is interested in a higher way of life, and that experience you can have by living in the ashram with your guru. He may appear to give you his grace or not, it does not matter. In fact, the guru is showering his grace upon us all the time, but we have to step forward to make an effort to open ourselves, to recognize and receive this blessing. This has been my experience while living with my guru and it can also become your realization.

—Swami Amritananda Saraswati

The teaching of sadhakas and sannyasins

Extract

It was during a period of intense sadhana that Swamiji had several visions of Shakti. At first he saw her in the form of a beautiful young girl, full of sadness. She stood outside his window for a long time with her head down, and when he tried to speak to her, she wouldn't look up. He gazed at her for some minutes before realizing that she was supernatural. He then understood the condition of women and their common aspiration for spiritual evolution and divine guidance. Later on, he saw Shakti in the form

of a serpent upon his bed, but when he called someone to remove it, the serpent disappeared and couldn't be found anywhere.

These experiences were an important turning point in Swamiji's life and in the growth of his mission. Thereafter he decided to free himself from all restrictions regarding women and to initiate females into the Sannyasa Order and give them the same training and facilities as males. So, to the horror and disrespect of many traditionalists, the ashram became the training ground for female and male sannyasins and students alike. Here such an atmosphere was created that people could live, work and learn together.

The three-year Sannyasa Training course was definitely one to break all the limitations and concepts of the mind. There were periods of intense sadhana when the intending sannyasins sat for twelve hours a day or more in the main hall practising pranayama. Classes were led by Swamiji himself, and it was said by all that he was very strict. During the three-hour long practice sessions, no one dared to move any part of the body, not even an eyelid. The diet was also very austere, dalia, dalia and dalia, three times a day, without salt; no coffee, tea or sugar. These were years of intensive spiritual growth and austerity aimed at purifying the total being and establishing a new basis for the mind. Now, looking back on it, we can say that this was the beginning of the new sannyasa order.

In 1973, the three-year Sannyasa Training course culminated in the memorable Golden Jubilee International Yoga Convention, which was held at BSY to celebrate Swamiji's 50th birthday anniversary. Thousands of devotees and yoga-minded people thronged to Munger from all parts of India and around the world in order to pay tribute to this simple sadhu who had become a widely-known and respected leader of the yogic renaissance. The convention was an enormous success, with Swamiji conducting the kriya yoga course himself – for the last time. After that he handed over all the teaching work.

In the years that followed, thousands of Indian aspirants have been trained in yogic techniques that Swamiji has formulated over many years of experience and deliberation. Swamiji studied little-known and popular tantric texts, practised many of these techniques and then adapted them to suit the needs of modern man.

Swamiji also reinterpreted the vedic system of ashrams and from the vanaprashtha ashrama has arisen the initiation of dedicated householders into karma sannyasa. Many aspirants from Teacher Training courses have taken this special diksha to more effectively teach and spread yoga under Swamiji's guidance and blessings.

Since the inception of Ganga Darshan, the development has flowed more towards an international teaching centre than a sannyasa training ashram. Here the whole science of yoga is taught. It is systematic and integral, a yoga of harmony. Although hatha, raja, karma, bhakti and jnana yogas are imbibed here, all lessons do not take place in the classrooms. Formal training has been kept to a minimum, except where special courses are concerned. Many lessons take place on a more subtle level with Swamiji using day-to-day situations, expertly conjured up, to help expand our minds and consciousness.

From this year, Swamiji has progressively handed over more and more programs, seminars, satsangs, etc., including the responsibility and presidency of Ganga Darshan itself, to his sannyasins. This leaves Swamiji freer to act as international inspirer and powerhouse for the spiritual energy that flows down through sannyasins and disciples to all the spiritual aspirants. A recent example was the national and international Intensive Kriya Yoga courses, which attracted many old and new spiritual aspirants. The electrifying power transmitted through these courses was like a promise of mankind's future spiritual growth on a universal scale.

As the seeds of Swamiji's many tours come to fruition, more people are descending upon this yogic energy centre,

this Ganga Darshan. As galaxies are swallowed up into black holes, as 'star wars' proliferate in the minds and on the computer consoles of modern man, an ever expanding beacon of light shines from an isolated corner of one of earth's most ancient continents. A sparkling star within the planet earth herself.

—*Unnamed*



1984

To Sri Swami Satyananda

You are an ocean of becoming and a seed of Self.
You are master of motion, eternally still.

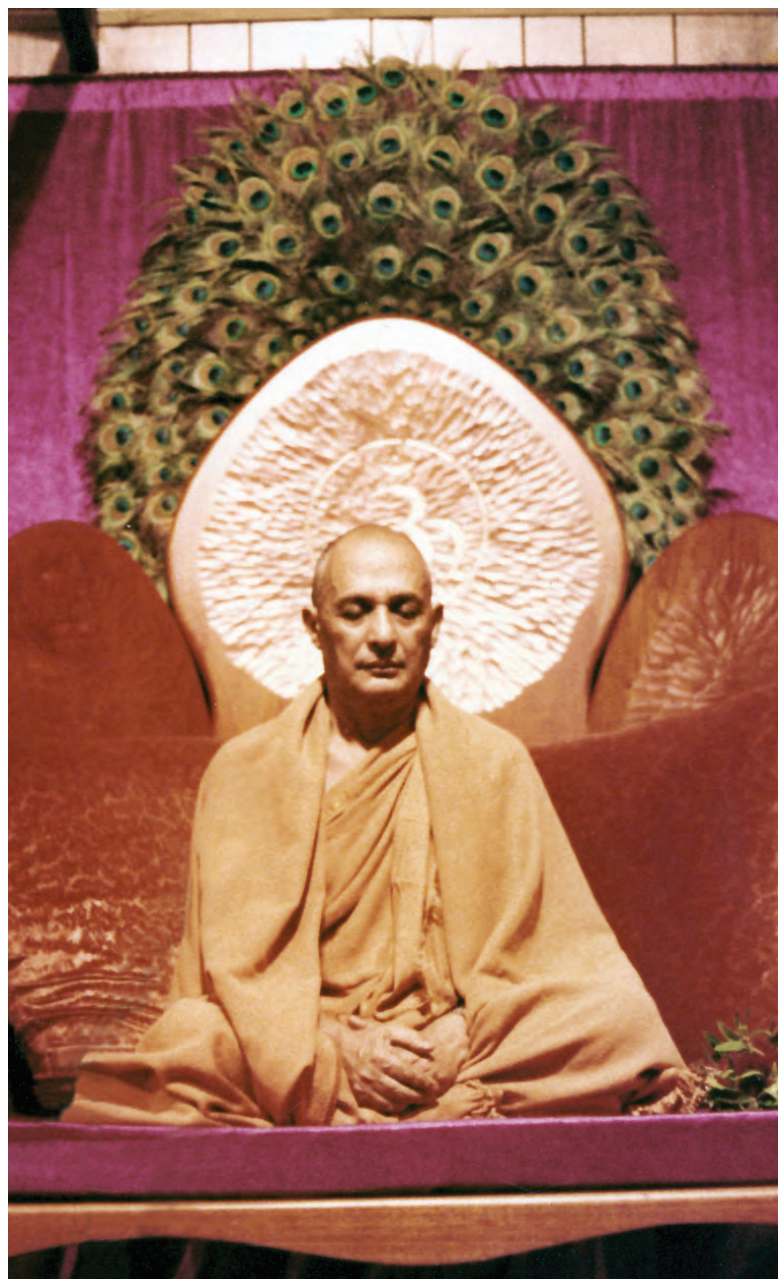
No one in samsara knows you.
No one through happenings and effects.

But
A glimpse, a tear, a flash of light . . .

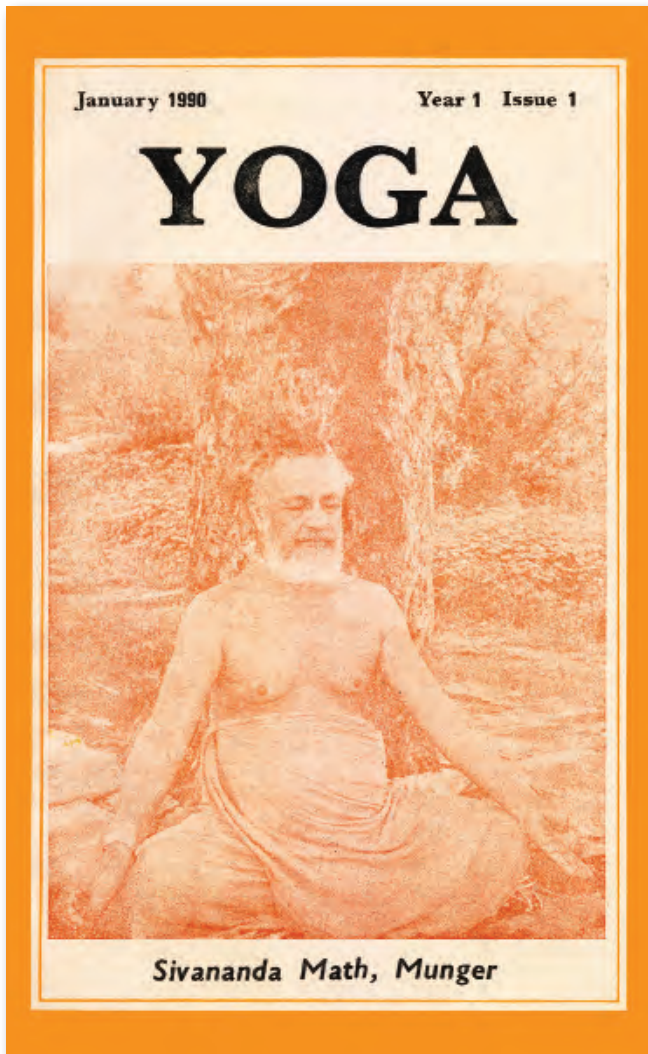
A flame burns all and everyone.
No distinction of “he” or “me”.
With mantra, kirtan, satsang, darshan
May flood waters rise in symphony and
Rip away the trees and roots –
The good and evil,

Leaving
Only the ability to see, to know, to be
You
The Self in the Self.

—*Swami Uttarkashi Saraswati, Florence, Italy*



Yoga 1990s



1990

From the desk of Swami Niranjan, January 1990

I was recalled to India by Swamiji in 1983 to assume the presidency of the Bihar School of Yoga. On that very day of 19 January, when I reached Munger, Swamiji said to me, “I have called you here to take over the entire work of BSY and all that I have created, and succeed me in every way. My role here is over. There are other horizons beckoning me and I must go.”

Of course, his words brought tears to my eyes then, as they do now, because I did not want to lose Swamiji; but I understood that Swamiji’s role is far greater and more universal, and in order for him to experience his universality, we may have to lose his physical presence. However, I did take the liberty of requesting him to stay in Munger a bit longer if only to be physically present to guide and inspire me, as I had been away from him almost since my childhood. To this he agreed and as you very well know, he remained in Munger until 1988.

1988 came, and he once again started speaking of his plans to go away. This he mentioned both publicly in his satsangs as well as privately to his disciples. Of course, he always did say, “My departure will be sudden and I will leave as I had come, with only one jhola!” Many did not believe this would ever happen and overlooked it, and many of us secretly prayed that it may never happen. True to his word,

on 8 August 1988, Swamiji bade farewell to BSY, to Munger, and to all that he had created in the short span of twenty years.

Since then we have been receiving his newsletters from time to time, describing his experiences at the places he has been visiting. They have served as a window into the present life of Swamiji, offering us a glimpse of the direction in which he is heading. These have been published in our past magazines, and for those of you who have missed out on them, we are once again printing a compilation in this magazine of all the letters received from Swamiji since he left.

One thing is clear from these newsletters, that Swamiji is now completely and totally surrendering himself to the divine will. His life as we have seen it earlier, has been an expression of that too, however, now his aim is total surrender, even to the extent of giving up food, clothing and shelter, if that be His will. He meets no one, eats once a day a meal so sparse that it could not feed a bird, cooks for himself, lives anywhere in any mud hut offered to him, and is forever lost in naam smaran.

I have had the good fortune to have his darshan four times since he left. At Baidyanath Dham where he broke the news to me that he was definitely now on a new path and his return to Munger, as before, in the role of guru was impossible. At the Kumbha Mela where he spoke of now living the life of a Paramahansa Naga as that was the initiation which he received from Swami Sivanandaji. In Rishikesh and Gangotri where he was lost in an inner vision and told me of his last visit to Gangotri in 1956 when he had taken the sankalpa of making me his successor, four years prior to my birth. Finally, at his mud kutiya in Triyambakeshwar where, without his saying anything, I myself knew that the bird had finally left the cage.

The transformation is unbelievable, but the change is so natural and spontaneous that one is left feeling that this too is an aspect of the divinity which Swamiji has shown us

in so many ways. Perhaps all this is a bit strange for us as we do not hear or know of any sannyasi or mahatma within our living experience who has taken such a step, but we have only to look into the shastras to know that the path Swamiji has chosen to tread is the same one which the great mahatmas such as Sukadeva, Adi Shankaracharya, Dattatreya, Mahavir and other paramahamsas who have left their footprints in the sands of time, have chosen for themselves.

Since I have taken over the work, I have always endeavoured to shoulder the institutional responsibility myself, leaving Swamiji free for the greater mission that he is destined for, but now more than ever, I strongly feel that Swamiji's path should no longer be restricted or hindered in any way by any of us, either by emotional attachments or personal needs, for which we may want to approach him from time to time. His destiny is that of one who can create the universal vision and we should consider ourselves privileged to support him in whatever way we can, for through that association we ourselves can be raised spiritually.

Therefore, it is my request to all householders, devotees, disciples, karma sannyasins, friends and well-wishers that they should not try to find out where Swamiji stays or try to meet him unless he calls them. To all sannyasins I say, prepare yourself for the work which lies ahead and try to emulate the example which has been set before you by our beloved Swamiji, Yes, the bird has truly flown and no cage or shutter can hold him now.

From the desk of Swami Niranjan, October 1988

Many of you may already know that Sri Swamiji left the Munger ashram on 8 August for a pilgrimage of the siddha teerthas in India. He left the ashram as a parivrajak carrying with him only Rs. 108 which was given to him by BSY as a mark of respect and devotion, as he firmly declined any further assistance.

In the tradition of sannyasa, we have read that detachment and vairagya are the true characteristics of a sannyasin,

and as Swami Sivanandaji said, it is this spirit of sannyasa we find resplendent in Swamiji. I recently had the honour of having Swamiji's darshan in Deoghar where he had come for the darshan of Baidyanath jyotirlingam after travelling to Kashi Vishwanath, Vindhyavasini, Dwarkadheesh, Vaishnava Devi, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Hardwar and Sivanandashram in Rishikesh.

During the meeting I requested him to come to Ganga Darshan for some time, but he firmly stated that he has no obligation or attachment with the gurudom of the Bihar School of Yoga. The first phase of his mission, he said, culminated with the foundation of Ganga Darshan, and the next phase begins with his parivrajak life. Whenever he visits BSY, it will be in the capacity of a sadhaka. In Swamiji's own words:

*With nothing on my body,
And with nothing in my hands.
Let me roam on the banks of the Ganga,
With the name of Shiva on my lips
And the thoughts of Devi and Durga in my mind.
Let me not even know that I exist:
And when I die, I will not know that I am dying.*

From the desk of Swami Niranjan, December 1988

People throng to religion, gurus and spiritual organizations for guidance and the achievement of their desires. In return they get self-satisfaction and many of their desires are also fulfilled. The problems of this planet may not get solved, but they get an opportunity to dip into the ocean of knowledge. They derive wisdom but it remains unexpressed in their behaviour, for the droplets of wisdom which they acquire evaporate in the hot sands of samsara.

The channelling of sublime wisdom into creative action is a rare gift which only a few extraordinary individuals possess. On an encounter with Swamiji, even a casual one, one is deeply impressed that he epitomizes such a person. Behind

his personality flows a stream in which wisdom and action are the main currents. The realization of the supreme, from the *Brahma Sutras* to the selfless action of the *Bhagavad Gita*, is a spontaneous expression which has become one in him.

Renunciation, giving of alms, sacrifice and austerities are performed by many people, but it is rarely done with a vision of the future. Rather, we see that it is done more for self-contentment. One kind of action moves, motivates and inspires the world, another is only for self-indulgence.

We are counted in the latter category. To motivate, inspire and provide direction to the world, a leader is required who embodies anger as well as pardon and peace, brilliance and shrewdness as well as simplicity and innocence, down to earth awareness as well as far-sightedness. One in whom both the fiery brilliance of Parashuram as well as the astute and calm wisdom of Rama are manifest. One who symbolizes the determination and righteous wisdom of Krishna and Yudhishtira, the glow and harsh warmth of the sun and the silvery, soothing and healing coolness of the moon. Such a multifaceted, mysterious and practical leader can mould a definite future from the gathering of scattered, diverted and dissipated energies.

Upon meeting and seeing Swamiji, all know deep down that he is such a leader. At present he is on a pilgrimage of India and its siddha teerthas with a definite constructive purpose. He is infusing the heart and mind with a new energy, a new mantra to unite the future. Be ready to receive him.

From the desk of Swami Niranjana, March 1989

This year I had the honour of being twice in the august presence of Sri Swamiji during the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad. First was on the Makar Sankranti day, 14 January 1989. I reached Allahabad at 2 am on 13 January and was taken by Sri Swamiji himself on a guided tour of the Mela Nagar and the Sangam. On this day we also had darshan of many sadhus gathered there for the occasion. On 14 January

at 3 am, after a ratri jagaran, we had our first bath in the freezing cold waters of the Sangam which was limited to three dips only on a very freezing morning.

The second visit, for which I had already taken permission from Swamiji, was on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya.

The visits at Kumbha Mela have left an everlasting and wondrous impression in our minds as we experienced faith, not as a concept, but as a living reality. The sea of humanity in which we got separated from Swamiji, then by his miracle met him again, to lose him a second time and then re-meet him, was another mind-blowing event and a different story.

From the desk of Swami Niranjana, September 1989

There are many different stages in the life of a sannyasin. First he builds an ashram at one place and serves; this is one stage. Then he abandons the ashram and his working place; this is the second stage. At first he works with a limited group and then, having been united with the universal consciousness, he works to achieve a universal aim, leaving the limited group. This higher state is then traditionally called kshetra sannyasa. The aim of Swamiji in leaving the ashram over a year ago was not merely to visit the different teerthas, but he had decided to take kshetra sannyasa.

In accordance with Swami Sivananda's instructions, when Swamiji started the work of spreading yoga, he had to stop paramahansa sadhana for some time in order to make yoga available for all. The first instruction Swamiji received from Swami Sivananda was to serve. When free from this service, that is, when all the inner samskaras are burnt, then sadhana begins.

I had an opportunity to live with Swamiji from 5 to 11 August in Triyambakeshwar. He was living in a small room (8' x 8') which he cleaned himself. He slept on the floor, spreading a mat, he took only sprouted mung for lunch and brahma khichari for dinner which he prepared himself. There was no running water or electricity. He did not even

meet with anyone. He was totally absorbed in sadhana, observing complete silence the whole day.

Swamiji said that a time must come in our lives when remembrance of the name goes on with total awareness. It should not be like ajapa japa where unconscious repetition of the mantra takes place. This japa should be continuous with total awareness. Swamiji told me that the only aim of his sadhana is unbroken repetition of the name. If he can be aware of the name even in the dissipated state of mind, then the perception of anahata nada will arise.

However, during this period when guru's consciousness is directed towards the universal or cosmic dimension, the disciples still wish to meet him at their level of consciousness. This causes disturbance in his sadhana. Therefore, Swamiji does not tell anyone where he is and what he is doing, Swamiji will continue his sadhana and austere life, not for one or two years, but for a long period of time. The state which he aims to achieve is total merging with the atma without leaving the physical body. In order to complete that, he needs our help.

Disciples should not think emotionally about how Swamiji cooks his own food and cleans his room himself. Instead they should think about how they can help him to achieve his aim. As disciples, we must follow his instructions word for word. He has given us many instructions, but we only follow those which appeal to us and forget about the others, claiming that we will do it when some inner inspiration comes. This is hypocrisy. If this is the way, then it is meaningless to become a disciple. If we follow the guru's instructions in this way, it is because of our ignorance. If we tread the path of ignorance and think we are doing what is right, then there is no solution at all. Such a person will ever remain backward in life. Now you have to decide which path to choose for yourself.

Vastrayam samarpayami

Extract

Many years ago I had asked Swamiji, “If a disciple had to have one quality, which should it be?” He had said, “Obedience. It will help you to get the bhavana. Naham karta, Guru karta, Guru karta hi kevalam.”

I kept that one word ‘obedience’ in the sacred recesses of my heart. Obedience to whom? What is the guru? What is the stuff *guru tattwa* or guru consciousness is made of? Is there someone who commands and someone who surrenders? What is this command and surrender made of?

As I sat before Swamiji in Deoghar, all the patterns dissolved. He was a mandala, a symbol of humanity at its peak. He was an unfolding of true manhood, all that is best and beautiful in spiritual consciousness. As I watched him, smeared with holy ash, ebony coloured by the overhead sun and the fire in front of him, the question rose in my mind, ‘Why is this necessary?’ As this surfaced to my mind, unvoiced because of reverence, the answer came, ‘I am not doing this for name or fame, not even for spiritual benefit. I am simply obeying an order.’

As he said this, everything became still. He was not there. I was not there. There was something permeating, pervading, overwhelming and uplifting. It was a glimpse, a second perhaps of being one. In that instant, I understood the meaning of obedience. The years between his utterance of the word and my understanding of it rolled into oblivion. The hair on my body stood on end as I realized how blessed I was to be in the presence of this magnificent phenomenon, to witness the flow of the divine in the empty bamboo of his physical frame. The guru was there. The shishya was there. And then both were stilled.

As I left, I felt a tangible presence, as if I were wrapped in love. This feeling persisted. I remembered him saying years ago, “After the first diksha, each initiation becomes subtler and subtler.”

—Swami Dharmakirti Saraswati, Bangalore

High on Waves

Who did you see
Sitting in the warm sun
Of the burial ground?
Who did you see?
Resplendent, beautiful and free – Siva.

Siva, seated on a tiger skin.
Siva, with silken skin of burnished copper
Covered in ashes.
Siva, with smiling eyes of black diamonds
In this world still, but not of it.
Full of light and
The resonance of Aum.

I am not doing it, he said,
It is being done.
Don't give unless I ask, he said,
We beggars own the earth!
Don't come unless I call you
He said

Oh disciple, can you hear
Can you see your Beloved in Siva
Can you hear him in A U M
Can you live him in Satyam?
Om Namo Narayanaya.

—*Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati, London, UK*

An inspiration for all ages

Extract

Every disciple has a unique feeling which is individual for his guru. I also have a feeling for my guru. Since early childhood I grew up on his lap, but I have never wanted to see or identify him in the figure of a father, a mother, a relative or even a guru. I have only seen and experienced him as an inspirer

who has encouraged us to progress in our lives despite every difficulty and problem. In the future also I wish to continue to see and experience him in this form. In him we see a blend of the fiery brilliance of Parasurama and the integrated personality of Rama, the wisdom of equanimity of Yoga Vasishtha and the dynamic karma yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In our history there have been certain persons who have had a higher vision and a higher goal since the time of their birth, and who do not need the help of a particular sadhana in order to reach the spiritual apex. Everything is attained by them with ease. There are certain personalities like Adi Shankaracharya, Ramana Maharshi and many others who had the spiritual spark within them from birth, and who went through life with total ease, keeping one direction, one goal, one aim, as the target. They didn't need any sadhanas, for they themselves were the living experience of everything.

In the life of our guru, we see this spark of wisdom, this samskara, which is what motivated him to move through life in one direction, with one aim. The path that was chosen by him was of renunciation, wisdom and selfless service.

When we look at the history of the Bihar School of Yoga, we can see how Swamiji through his selfless effort, worked for the propagation of yoga from door to door and from shore to shore, to fulfil the physical and psychological need for health, equilibrium, balance and happiness, and at the same time, to make people aware of the spark of the divine self inside.

According to the need of the modern age, he started many scientific investigations, therapeutic investigations, literary investigations, into the science of yoga. The aim and purpose of Swamiji was, along with the teaching and practices of yoga, to provide a path or system whereby people could experience the highest truth through which they would be able to realize the element of spirit within them.

Along with this effort on the social level to provide peace, happiness and contentment in the public at large, he also established another institution by the name of Sivananda Math, which was dedicated to the memory of his own guru,

Swami Sivananda. The purpose of Sivananda Math was not to propagate yoga but to promote social service.

In 1988, when all the branches of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement were well established throughout the world, and he was at the apex of achievement, one night Swamiji suddenly decided, 'Now, I have to leave all this; this was not my aim. This effort was to rid myself of my obligations to my guru, and I have fulfilled them'. Swamiji says, "I am just a wave in the ocean which rises once, and anything that comes in the way of the wave is carried with it. Now other waves have to rise in this ocean, so that they can also contribute to the development of the human society."

There are examples in history of many saints and people with higher vision who have started a work which they have later on handed to their disciples, so that the work does not stop with them, but it continues eternally. They have separated themselves from the aim of the institution and established themselves in universal consciousness. This is what we see in the life of Sri Swamiji also, and this is an example of sannyasa life.

In his last letter he had written to us that, "For you, I am dead now, and if I am alive, it will be in the light of your spirit. If you want to see me, then try to see me, not with the physical eyes, but with the eyes of the spirit. I do not want that anybody should come to me with their physical or mental problems, because now I am not that person who gives answers. I have removed my robes and I am only a sadhaka. I only have one aim in my sadhana, the experience of higher nature within life and merging with the higher nature. So, for this, let me be free and do not bind me in any way."

Swamiji has always said that to be a guru is easy, but to be a disciple is very difficult. In his life we see the perfection of discipleship at the highest apex of yoga. He lived like a disciple and followed the mandates of his guru and of God. Therefore, I always consider him as my inspirer.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Developing an attentive mind

Extract

I shall give you one small instance in relation to Swami Satyananda Saraswati regarding awareness in simple everyday living. Some years ago Swamiji visited France for a seminar on transmission. It was held near Paris in a beautiful park in whose grounds stood a castle. Close to this park was a railway line. One afternoon, as we were on our way to lunch with a group of swamis around Swamiji, a train suddenly whooshed by. Swamiji turned to watch it as it sped past and when it was out of sight he turned back and said smiling but very pointedly, “It was a goods train with fourteen carriages.” We were completely taken aback because we had only seen a train flash past. He explained that being attentive to the outside world is the best training for watching the inside world.

—*Swami Yogabhakti Saraswati, France*

My thoughts on Sri Swamiji, my Gurudev

You are the Supreme Being who abideth in all beings.
You are Lord of all Lords.
You are the Atman that lives in me.
You are my true self.
You are the Self,
The Self in all beings.

You are purusha, the Master.
You are the end of all sadhana.
You are the blessing of all the blessings.
Without You there cannot be peace – shanti.

You are calm and serene.
You are the moon and the sun, ever shining.

Oh! Giver of shanti, let me bow at Your lotus feet.
Your sweet lotus feet have walked on my soul, in my house,
In the inner chamber of my heart.

How can I pay You this infinite debt?
I am millions of times blessed because You looked at me.
I saw infinite love in Your lotus eyes.
My bosom bursts in tears.
You are me, I am You.
Union, union.
Come union, come the merging.
No more but You.
You, the Supreme Self – the Self, the Self – Atman.
I bow and prostrate to Thee.

—Swami Anusandhana, Satyananda Ashram Florence, Italy



1991

Editorial

Swamiji says, “I have nothing more to say to anyone and no further guidance to give. For twenty-six or more years I have lived with the people answering their questions and helping them on the spiritual path. Now I withdraw my responsibility. Those who are receptive, they will surely benefit from what I have told them, but those who are not, they will now have to find their own way.”

We cannot underestimate the truth of his words. For Swamiji has said it all. There is no topic which he has not elucidated for us, and these are all available in his books. Now his role is a more universal one. If we want to reach out to him, it should be through the medium of the spirit and not through the body and the mind, which is just a gross relationship.

After all, Swamiji's life has been one of great accomplishment throughout. He has excelled in every field, as a disciple, a guru, an administrator and an adept of yoga and tantra. There is no sadhana that he has not done. He has lived like a beggar and also like a king. Lakshmi bestowed on him immense wealth, Saraswati bestowed on him vidya, Kali bestowed on him cosmic awareness, and Durga bestowed on him immense spiritual power. There was simply no need for him to abandon or renounce what he had created and live here in Deoghar so austere.

However, Swamiji says that when he left his home for sannyasa the burning desire was for self-realization at the feet of his guru. It was not for amassing wealth, of which he already had plenty, that he left his home, nor for building an ashram or making disciples and attaining name and fame. He simply accomplished that as a duty and service to his guru. There are obligations in the life of every individual which he has to fulfil. If he does not perform they will catch up with him some day. These obligations which also apply to a sannyasin are known as *pitirina*, obligations to ancestors, *devarina*, obligations to the divine beings, and *gururina*, obligations to guru. The Bihar School of Yoga was Swamiji's fulfilment of his *gururina*.

This precisely explains the developments in Swamiji's life over the past years. He created the Bihar School of Yoga at the command of his guru and the guidance he received from his ishta devata. When the next command came he abandoned what he had created to fulfil it. Swamiji says, "I am simply a servant; if another command comes, I will leave even this. It does not matter. None should mourn the loss of their guru. I even abandoned the mantle of guru the day I left Munger. If you people want more guidance you may go to Munger or search for some mahatma or sadhu. Do not come to me; I am a sadhaka."

In October 1989 during Ashwin Navaratri, the day before his anusthana began Swamiji called the few sannyasins present at the Akhara to see the magnificent sight of a thick twelve-feet long geru-coloured nag serpent which did *parikram*, circumambulation, of the entire property and disappeared into a tree at the centre of the Akhara. It is no coincidence that this event was revealed in a dream before it occurred. As this was a highly auspicious sign, a murti of Swami Sivananda and one of Adi Shankaracharya have been installed near this spot. During his tirth yatra it was in Vasukinath that Swamiji had the darshan of Nag Nath coiled around his neck saying, "Become a chakravarti!" In Swamiji's own words:

*In Vasukinath
as I lay under a shady tree
I had a dream – vision
of a hooded serpent
coiled around my neck
and the clear instruction:
Become a Chakravarti!*

Since he arrived at the Akhara Swamiji has never stepped out. He says, “Here I will live like a paramahansa who has nothing to do with the world.” A paramahansa lives simply with the minimum possible material comforts. His bed is the bare grass and his clothing his own natural skin. He eats little, living on a frugal diet he prepares himself. He does not give upadesha, jnana or diksha, nor does he pose to be a great mahatma, but rather he lives away from the glare of public life.

Many people have questioned the need for Swamiji to do all these sadhanas and live in austerity when he has already proven his spiritual calibre. In answer Swamiji says that apart from being the best way of life and one that he finds most fulfilling, he is also aware that if he does not set this example, others after him will take the liberty of proclaiming themselves Paramahansas without ever having undergone the disciplines necessary for attaining that state. It is out of his infinite compassion and grace that he is paving the guidelines for sincere sannyasins to emulate in the future.

It is these divine incarnations and illumined beings who pave the way for the future generations by setting an example for them. In difficult times we can draw inspiration from them. Swamiji too has set an example that all of us can at least aspire for, even if we cannot emulate him. From his early childhood he showed an extraordinary genius born out of his immense vairagya. His accomplishments did not ever cause him to swerve from his goal of attaining the beauties of sannyasa and renunciation. He exhibited a natural tendency

to be familiar with and at ease in any situation. When he directed the Bihar School of Yoga it was with perfection and intuition, guiding thousands of souls all over the world in their strive for perfection in life and beyond. Today, as an ascetic, far from the glitter and glamour of gurudom, he shows the same elan and ease. It is not common to find a guru who renounces his gaddi and names his successor in his own lifetime. In living memory we cannot cite any example of this kind. Yet Swamiji has done it, for his goal is firmly set on the divine path.



1993

Editorial

From time to time a special kind of man is born on earth who leaves society to gain greatness of spirit, and then return to the world to aid others who are suffering, or who may themselves wish to follow the spiritual path. The world has a great history of such spiritual benefactors dating back to the vedic rishis, to the biblical prophets and seers, to Christ, Buddha, Mahavira, Mohammed, and more recently Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Swami Sivananda. One of these great saints of recent times is Paramahansa Satyananda who has most strongly advocated the integration of yoga into society and encouraged the spiritual evolution of all people.

Right from birth he showed extraordinary spiritual and practical qualities which would one day guide spiritual aspirants all over the globe. In the year 1943 his spiritual yearning as a young man propelled him to search for the Guru who could guide him. This Guru was discovered in the form of Swami Sivananda at Rishikesh. There the young man dedicated himself to the service of his Guru with utmost zeal and became known as Swami Satyananda. A scholar with sharp intellect and quick wit, he exhibited tremendous organizational, practical, spiritual and leadership qualities.

Recognizing the special God-given qualities in him, his Guru, Swami Sivananda, blessed him and said of him,

“Swami Satyananda is full of the Nachiketa element. Few could have such vairagya at such a young age. He is an ideal sadhaka and nishkama sevak.” After attaining full spiritual maturity, Swami Satyananda, left his Guru’s ashram as a paramahansa sannyasin with a mandate from his Guru to propagate the yogic vision ‘from shore to shore and door to door’.

In 1963, twenty years after renouncing the world and perfecting his spiritual experiences, Paramahansa Satyananda established the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger, which became the focal point of yogic experience for people from all over the world. From here, Paramahansa Satyananda, with devotion to the ideals of Swami Sivananda, matched by his untiring energy, dedicated himself to disseminating this evolutionary culture of the world.

In order to fulfil his Guru’s mandate, Paramahansa Satyananda embarked on many world tours, inspiring countless aspirants to tread the yogic path. He also initiated thousands into sannyasa and karma sannyasa, providing them with yogic vision. Under his inspiration, over five hundred small yoga groups and many ashrams developed in India and different countries. He became one of the first yogic masters to translate the ancient yogic principles and techniques into modern scientific language by inspiring research into the healing principles of yoga.

In 1983, after fulfilling the mandate of Swami Sivananda and creating a world of yoga, Paramahansa Satyananda handed over all the responsibilities and obligations of a yoga master, guru and guide, to his disciple, Paramahansa Niranjanananda. He then left all that he had created, never to look back, and took up the life of a paramahansa sadhaka.

Yoga in prison

Extract

In 1968 when Paramahamsaji went to the United States, he was invited to a prison in Chicago to teach yoga. He was confronted by a completely unruly mob of about one hundred and fifty prisoners and convicts. Some were fighting with each other, some were smoking chillums, ganja and marijuana in one corner, some were creating a lot of disturbance while others were jeering and laughing. The wardens were unable to control the lot of them. In that condition Paramahamsaji spent about one hour, simply giving the instruction, "Please try to be quiet and lie down."

At the end of the session, if you call that a session, the head prisoner, the dadda, came to Paramahamsaji, and said, "What are you trying to teach us?" Paramahamsaji said, "I'm not trying to teach you anything. I only want you to lie down quietly on the floor for five minutes." The dadda said to him, "We will do it if you fulfil one of our conditions." "What is it?" Paramahamsaji asked. One of them offered a cigarette to him and Paramahamsaji said, "All right, I will have a cigarette, but first lie down." Somehow, the headman made the other prisoners lie down, and for five minutes they practised yoga nidra. Paramahamsaji then left the room and told the warden, "I'm not coming back again." The warden said, "Swamiji, I don't know what you have done, but since you left the room there has been absolute silence, everyone is quiet. You have to come back again!"

So Paramahamsaji went back the next day and for one week he gave them the practice of yoga nidra, and at the end of the seminar Paramahamsaji told the head prisoner, "You have fulfilled my condition, now I will fulfil yours. Give me your packet of cigarettes." The prisoner said, "Swamiji, I'm really sorry. How can I ask a swami to have a cigarette!" After that, the same prisoner left the maximum security cell, and began to teach other prisoners across the United States.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Looking back

Extract

It was in 1962, when I was a student of the Shri Lakshmi Narayan Trust in Dhanbad, that respected Swami Satyananda Saraswati visited our college. During that time I had no interest in swamis and sadhus. Hence, when I came to know about it I planned to escape secretly from there. However, my plan failed and I had to stay there for his talk. As Paramahamsaji started his speech, unexpectedly we were all lost in his words. We were so much influenced that we did not want to get up even at the end. This was my first meeting with Paramahamsaji.

I was married into a family where Swami Satyananda had spent many days. My in-laws were the followers of Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, the Guru of Swami Satyananda, and they met Swami Satyananda there itself. My mother-in-law even tied a rakhi on him. After my marriage in 1968, Paramahamsaji came to Bhagalpur and that was my second meeting with him.

In 1969, Paramahamsaji along with twenty-one foreign disciples, visited our place for a week. During this period I got the chance to stay near Paramahamsaji who was giving a program in a school. My mother-in-law used to go with him, and hence the entire household responsibility was on me. I was not physically fit as I was expecting a baby. Early in the morning Paramahamsaji along with his followers and my in-laws used to go for his program. Then I used to run into the kitchen to cook the food because they used to return by nine o'clock. After this they went for satsang which was attended by a big crowd. Two o'clock was the time for tea and snacks and after that kirtan. After taking their food they used to return to the school at eight o'clock in the evening.

Paramahamsaji used to tell me, "Listen, please bring a cup of tea or coffee for me and only for me", but the sanniyasins used to ask for the same. The first day I got nervous as to what to do and what not to do. If I made tea

for them I would disobey Paramahamsaji and if I refused, the sannyasins would feel bad. When I looked questioningly at Paramahamsaji he smilingly asked me to prepare tea for everyone. Hence, I felt that, besides being a discipline-loving Guru, he also had a childlike nature.

His speeches were full of reality and used to touch my heart. Although going through the pregnancy, I never felt tired after all the hard work. Was it not due to his grace? My husband cared for Paramahamsaji and the swamis who were polite and soft spoken. One day my mother-in-law asked Paramahamsaji if he had seen any difference in my husband's behaviour during his stay. He calmly replied that previously he gave orders and now he requests.

After that I frequently used to meet Paramahamsaji either in Bhagalpur or in Sivananda Kutir, Munger, but these meetings lasted just for an hour or so. In the beginning Sivananda Kutir was a small ashram with a few rooms and a hall where the *akhandā jyoti*, eternal flame, used to be. The ashram was clean and systematic, and my every visit found a new addition to it.

Once during my Guru Poornima visit I was shocked to see the popularity and deeds of Paramahamsaji. His *pada poojan*, worshipping the Guru's feet, started from three o'clock in the morning and continued till twelve noon. The prasad and food distribution started from twelve o'clock and people kept on coming and eating. Paramahamsaji himself supervised the work, and at last we had our lunch at three o'clock with him. After taking rest for ten minutes he again started with his work. Kirtan and *pravachan*, speeches, were scheduled for half past three. Paramahamsaji gave us his own room in which to take rest.

Paramahamsaji was against stopping children from being mischievous. When Swami Niranjanananda was very young I used to find him either on top of a big tree or on top of the main gate. When Paramahamsaji visited our place I always found Swami Niranjanji on the roof of the car. When I used to ask him to get down for food Paramahamsaji would say,

“You better give him the food there itself because he is not going to get down.”

Later, whenever I visited the ashram I found Paramahamsaji very busy; the ashram had developed a lot. The construction work of Ganga Darshan was in full swing. Besides all this he used to give his valuable time to us. He always asked about our wellbeing and ate with us. Once when I visited Munger during the children’s camp to drop off our children there, we were amazed to see the well-systematized administration. Paramahamsaji himself was abroad and in his place was Swami Niranjanji who was a fully-grown man. He appeared like a shadow of Swami Satyanandaji. My children learned a lot during this stay. It was only because of the planning of Paramahamsaji and the hard work of Swami Niranjananandaji that the camp attended by four hundred children was such a success. All the devoted sannyasis very impressively looked after the children.

Ganga Darshan was fully constructed, a lonely and sinister-looking mountain had taken the form of a peaceful and holy ashram. The credit goes to Paramahamsaji. The administration, cleanliness and hard work is worth seeing. All the sannyasins perform their work silently and efficiently; there is no trace of laziness. Everything is peaceful and quiet and everyone is busy from kitchen to press and offices.

—Mrs Geeta Sahai, Bhagalpur

Flying West

There were about seven or eight of us sitting in front of the hall in old BSY having kirtan, when the telephone rang. In those days the telephone was in panchavati, the room next door to the hall. The swami who used to answer the phone, got up and after speaking came back and said to me, “Paramahamsaji says you have to go to Calcutta today. So pack your things and be ready.”

It was 26 February 1970. One swami had the job of taking me to Calcutta. We went to the Munger railway

station, the local train was just standing there. We got into one compartment, locked the door, spread our dhotis on the bunks and fell flat during the half-hour trip to Jamalpur. We were all alone, there was no one else in the compartment. This is something you will not find in today's Munger.

That very night we took a train from Jamalpur to Kiul, and from Kiul we travelled straight to Calcutta. We had three hundred rupees with us. On the morning of 27 February, around ten o'clock, we got off the train and there was Paramahamsaji standing on the platform waiting for us. The first thing he said was, "Money!" The swami with me took out two hundred and twenty rupees and gave it to Paramahamsaji. Paramahamsaji did a quick calculation: two tickets, this, that, and said, "Sixty rupees short, what happened to the other sixty rupees?" The swami said, "Well, Swamiji, we ate."

Then Paramahamsaji said one thing which has never left me, "Even if you have money, you should live like a beggar." That was the only sentence he said until we came to the place where he was staying. In the meanwhile our hearts were banging – sixty rupees, my God! The other swami was actually trembling. I thought, "God! Why did we have that sweet? Why did we have that tea? We could have done without them." After we reached the hotel in Alipore, Paramahamsaji said to me, "You are coming with me to Ireland."

On 27 February evening, we took a flight from Calcutta to New Delhi. It was my first time on a plane. I did not realize when we took off and when we landed because I had fallen asleep, and suddenly there was this metropolitan city, New Delhi. We went to the Ashok Hotel which is the biggest hotel in Delhi and there, for the first time in my life I saw a full-sized mirror. Paramahamsaji gave me a guided tour of the Ashok Hotel: this is the room, you put the key through this hole to open the door, and so on. In BSY things did not work like that in those days.

So I suddenly came across this full-sized mirror, and I had never in my life come face to face with one before, I used to hide from Paramahamsaji while he was talking with someone and go and stand in front of that mirror, but of course, Paramahamsaji noticed for nothing used to escape his eyes.

On the night of 28 February, we got on this big jumbo plane. In those days Indian airlines used to have pocket planes. From a pocket plane to a big jumbo. I felt like I had entered a city! I can still recall that image. So many people, just heads and heads in rows, and I said to Paramahamsaji. "This plane will not fly." He asked, "Why?" I said, "There are too many people here."

So off we went and when we landed it was night time. I was looking out of the window and I could not believe I could see so many lights! As far as the eye could see there were just rows and rows of lights and lights and more lights. I said, "Swamiji, what is this?" He said, "Well, this is London."

When we came down into the terminal Paramahamsaji got a trolley. "Swamiji may I push that?" He said, "Alright." It was one of those with the locking system. I was trying and trying to push it but it would not budge. Then Paramahamsaji told me, "Release that handle, just hold here and push." Unfortunately it was one of those crooked ones which always tend to go the wrong way. I started pushing, but at the end I found Paramahamsaji standing somewhere else. So I just left everything and ran to him and said, "Swamiji it does not go where I want it to go." So again he came and saved the situation.

It was nice in the airport. There were huge neon lights and I had never seen anything like that before. It was like paradise for me at that time. Finally we went out and there were many people waiting for us. We got into a car and by the time we reached the house where we stayed it was late, so we went to sleep.

The next morning when I woke up I went running to Paramahamsaji and said, "Swamiji, why is everything here

white?" It had snowed and I had never seen snow before. The trees were covered with snow, everything was covered with it. I said to Paramahamsaji, "What kind of country is this? The trees are white, the leaves are white, the flowers are white, the ground is white. What is this?" Then he said, "Come with me," and we went out- He picked up a handful of snow and said, "Look, this is snow." Then he told me about snow and ice. Another funny experience occurred. I went to the bathroom in the house in which we were staying and saw all these funny things and tried them all. There was no mug near the toilet and also there was this roll of paper and I could not understand why. I looked for a pen, but could not find one. I wondered, "Why are these people keeping paper in their bathroom?" There were some magazines also. I thought, "Perhaps this is the office!" Once again I went to Paramahamsaji, "Swamiji, there is no mug in the bathroom." He said, "Isn't there any paper?" "Yes, but what do you do with it?". He began to laugh. After that I said, "How do I take my bath? I looked, there are no buckets!"

Paramahamsaji gave me my first bath. He put me inside the tub and said, "You sit here and open the tap." Hot water! "Swamiji is there fire? Where is this hot water coming from?" He filled up the tub about two inches and said, "First you use this water with some soap, wash yourself, then throw the water out. Then fill it up again to the top." For about one hour I just lay there. That was my first day in England, in 1970.

Butter used to be my favourite food, a two-inch thick layer of butter and large slices of white bread, I used to take half of that big slab, put it in between two pieces of bread and eat it. During the week that we stayed in London I ate about ten of those slabs.

At one point I asked Paramahamsaji, "Why are the people here so white? Do they suffer from any disease?" Paramahamsaji said, "No, it is just their colour!" These were very first, childhood experiences in the West.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

1994

When the flowers bloom, it is not necessary to beckon the bees

Extract

After the convention (November 1993) we travelled five hours from Munger to have the darshan of Paramahansa Satyananda. Three mornings, for an hour each day, we sat with him. Seeing him now bearded, clad only in a loincloth and head cover, I found myself looking for familiar signs and gestures. His humour, upward side glance, total command over the situation, and alertness to the present moment, concern for safety and comfort of people, these were all there. But what was more visible to me was a sense of abandonment, unburdened freedom, and wonderful childlikeness.

Paramahamsaji talked about the present phase of his life and the intensity of the sadhana that he has to do. He reiterated that to become a guru, to collect disciples, to work for some goal; this was not the purpose which brought him to sannyasa. The purpose was the discovery of the Divine. All that he did was to exhaust his karmas. In 1988, he left the Bihar School of Yoga to devote himself solely to obtaining Bhagawan's darshan. He said, "I request all of you to ask God to please give His darshan to Swami Satyananda." Humorously he added that in the light of so many knowing

him, with such a large number of applications coming in, God would have to consider it!

—*Homayun Taba, Bombay*

Chronicles of a Paramahamsa

Extract

24th December 1993, 5 pm

Alakh Bara abounds with beautiful birds, some of them are even migratory with a tab on them. It was not so when he came, but then Sri Swamiji started inviting them. Every day grains were offered to them with the loud chanting of the mantra 'Ai!' (Come, come). He has also made small houses for them and placed them in the trees, so that they are safe and secure. Sri Swamiji says birds are messengers from heaven. They bring us good tidings from above.

Just then, in the quiet stillness of the evening the melody of an ektara was heard. It is an instrument with only one string which wandering sadhus of the Bhakti Marga sometimes carry with them to play when they are singing bhajans and songs of bhakti.

It was a sadhu. He was singing Hari bhajans and, on reaching the gate of Alakh Bara, he shouted loudly from outside, "Alakh Niranjan!" The sevakas at Alakh Bara were busy preparing for pooja (worship) and arati (waving of lights), of Tulsi Mai who is the Ishta Devi of Paramahamsa Alakh Bara. In a few moments Sri Swamiji would blow the Panchajanya Dakshinamukhi Shankh, and commence Tulsi pooja.

The Panchajanya Dakshinamukhi Shankh is used only for worship because it is rare and sacred. It is called Panchajanya after one of the thousand names of Lord Krishna, who blew this shankh during the Mahabharata war. It is south faced and held with the left hand. It has a powerful sound like the roar of a lion. Sri Swamiji received the Panchajanya shankh from Lord Jagannath of Puri. He blows it twice daily; once at dawn

when he bathes Tulsi, and again at dusk when he lights the lamps. A few days earlier, on Marga Seersha Poornima, Sri Swamiji had performed Tulsi Vivah, the marriage of Tulsi.

The Tulsi *kalevar*, sapling, is changed four times a year. On that day, amidst the chanting of mantra, Tulsi Mai is dug out and replaced with a tender sapling who will stay for four months. The previous Tulsi is then immersed in the Ganga. The vedic tradition believes that Goddess Lakshmi resides in Tulsi.

There are *stotras*, vedic hymns, dedicated to Tulsi through which she is venerated and Lakshmi invoked into her, but they have to be precise and accurate or else the plant does not sustain itself. It is also tender, sensitive and touchy. Tulsi Mai appeared at Alakh Bara on her own, she was not brought there. She manifested herself.

On hearing the call of the sadhu, Sri Swamiji called one of the sevaks and sent her to find out who was at the gate and what he needed. He told the sevak to ask the sadhu four questions. Just as grihasthas (householders) have a formal way of greeting and introducing themselves, either with a handshake or with folded hands, in the same way a sadhu too has a laid down procedure by which his entire tradition can be known. If he is able to give the appropriate answer he is taken to be a sadhu, otherwise he is just a wanderer in sadhu garb. Oh, yes, there are many of those too! So the sevak asked the sadhu those four questions. His answers were apt and he was given what he came for.

This practice of living on bhiksha or alms is customary only for a sannyasin who is a Bahudak. In the four stages of sannyasa which are Kutichak, Bahudak, Hamsa and Paramahamsa, Bahudak is the second stage. Before that is Kutichak when the sannyasin lives with the Guru serving him for a full twelve years. During that period he does everything for his Guru. He collects wood from the forest for his dhuni, chops the logs, prepares the items for his pooja or sadhana, cleans his kutiya, (hut) and washes his kaupeen (loincloth). If the Guru smokes, he cleans and prepares his chillum

or hookah, cuts the vegetables and cleans the vessels in preparation for cooking, if the Guru has a large institution, he does his accounting, banking, typing and other official work.

After that, when the twelve years are over, he leaves only at the aadesh (command) of the Guru and wanders freely in the world, having only the sky for his roof and the earth for his bed. He is permitted to carry only the barest items and is not allowed to stay in any place for more than three days. He is also strictly forbidden to hoard anything that is given to him in biksha and must accept only what he needs for his immediate use. During that period he can give upadesh (advice) and interact with everyone, putting into use the knowledge he has acquired through Guru seva. Assessing himself, his strengths and weaknesses, as well as assimilating all that he sees and hears around him. During that period the Bahudak formulates a philosophy for himself as well as deciding what he has to do in the future in order to both serve his fellow beings and evolve spiritually.

When that becomes clear he enters the Hamsa stage, during which he can settle in one place and serve, as well as guide the people, keeping in mind his own spiritual quest for which he left his home and donned the guru robes. The last stage is Paramahamsa, when the karmas are complete and the role becomes a universal one; when the sannyasin lives in total communication with God and acts as his divine agent for fulfilling a mission.

The Bahudak knocking at the gate for bhiksha made one reminisce and imagine how Sri Swamiji too must have gone for bhiksha, with meagre belongings. For he too had wandered from 1956 to 1963 after serving Swami Sivanandji for twelve years in Rishikesh on the sacred banks of the Ganga.

When his twelve years were complete, Sri Swamiji went to his Guru's kutiya to pay obeisance. It was twelve years exactly to the minute. Swami Sivanandji placed his hand on Sri Swamiji's head and in precisely five minutes initiated him into the mystic kriyas of kriya yoga. Sri Swamiji performed

them effortlessly, in absolute spontaneity, for he had received the aadesh and blessings of his Sadguru. Swami Sivanandji then gave him two geru dhotis, a jhola (bag) and 108 rupees which are still preserved in Munger. There was one more aadesh that was given from Guru to disciple, "Spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore."

Those very words became the mission of Sri Swamiji. He wandered freely throughout the Asian subcontinent, feeling the pulse of the people. What were their needs and how best was he to fulfil the words of his Guru in that light? He travelled extensively to Afghanistan, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Pakistan and Baluchistan, by foot, by bullock cart, by bus, by car and even by plane if the opportunity presented itself.

His purpose was spiritual; his words according to the culture and understanding of the people. During that period he realized one important factor on which he later based his teachings. That although his tradition was Vedanta, it was not the need of the masses. After all, *Aham Brahmasmi* cannot be realized by the common man. If that were so then we cannot call the realization of *Aham Brahmasmi* the highest achievement that Vedanta speaks of. The realization of *Aham Brahmasmi* unfolds along with the living experience that everything in creation, be it a goat, cow or buffalo, is reverberating with divinity. How many can claim to have had that experience? We are too caught up in the perplexities of life and cannot even realize the divinity in ourselves, let alone see it in others. It was for this reason that Sri Swamiji felt that he should talk to people in a language they could readily understand and incorporate into their lives – the language of yoga.

During his Bahudak life he also lived as a bhikshak on alms. He had many devotees, but he did not go to them. Instead he chose to live as a beggar like those you see on the streets who don't know where their next meal is going to come from or whether they will get any food at all. There were times when he did not have food to eat for days. There

were times when he was mercilessly turned away without food from the door on which he knocked. Perhaps it was not in their destiny to attain the fruits of serving a great soul.

He saw all that but it did not perturb him. In no way was he disturbed by it. That was the *anubhava* (experience) he had through insult, injury and rejection. In the *Bhagavad Gita* that state is described as *sthita prajna*, when the consciousness is stable. By the term consciousness we mean, not just the present one, but the four states of consciousness: the conscious, subconscious, unconscious and *turiya*, transcendental, states. The four states in balance and harmony is called *sthita prajna*.

In the shastras *sthita prajna* is described as *durlabh*, difficult to attain, because we are talking about balance of an area of our personality of which we have no knowledge and over which we have absolutely no control. After all, judge for yourself. In your life does a thought not disturb your behaviour and your personality? Does a situation, circumstance or event not disturb you? Yes, it does, and there's no denying that. In this infirm condition where is the place of Vedanta? So, he spoke of yoga, because yoga too leads one to the same point of experience eventually.

One day, after being turned away from all places, faint with hunger, he started out on foot from Raigarh Town to Laxmipur. After half an hour of walking under the hot sun and dusty roads he reached Laxmipur Karchuliyan. Tired, dehydrated and dizzy with hunger he sat down under the shade of a tree. As it happened, there was a small villa just in front of the tree where he laid down to rest. In that villa lived a Catholic priest who was Belgian. A short stocky man with a warm sense of humour, he welcomed Swamiji and invited him to tea and biscuits and offered him one of his Havana cigars. Sri Swamiji accepted the cigar and inhaled deeply. As if by a miracle, his headache of over three days disappeared at once. He left soon after, not asking for more.

In those days Sri Swamiji sang a lot of kirtans. He knew so many, in many languages. That too was an *aadesh* he

had received from one of the greatest saints of this century, Sri Anandamayi Ma. While he was still in school, his maths teacher took Sri Swamiji to have darshan of Ma Anandamayi in Almorah. She singled him out at once, placed her hand on his head and said, “Sing kirtan wherever you go.”

He did. All throughout his Bahudak wanderings. His voice was rich and touched the core of hearts wherever he went. In the ancient vedic scriptures it is stated that in this Kali Yuga, it is only the repetition of the Lord’s name that will help you cross over from the mundane to the transcendental. Dhyana, japa, yajnas are prescribed for other yugas, they will not succeed in this yuga. Just kirtan with devotion is sufficient to transform the mind. Sri Swamiji realized at that very early age that kirtan was the panacea of the people.

Anandamayi Ma also told him, “You have a great destiny before you and you will surely fulfil it.” Lord Dattatreya had twenty-four gurus: the sun, the birds, the running brook, and so forth. In the same way, there is a lesson to learn from everything in life.

Sri Swamiji says, “It is the here and now that is real, because you are experiencing it, but that does not mean that other areas of experience do not exist.”

Today, you may like the circumstances you are in, but tomorrow, on account of an event you may begin to dislike it and then that experience becomes real. No, that is only superficial. It is not the state of sthita prajna. Sri Swamiji says that sthita prajna can be said to be that state where, in any type of *anubhava* or experience, whether it be love, fear, anger, compassion, affection, jealousy, greed, delusion, so on and so forth, the consciousness remains stable and balanced, not just the present state of consciousness but all that precedes and follows it.

He says, “It is not wrong to feel fear, anger and jealousy. It is natural, but when you feel fear why are you imbalanced by it? It is also possible to feel fear and not be affected by it. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra during the great Mahabharata war Arjun was imbalanced when he felt

dejection. It was then that Lord Krishna instructed him on the state of sthita prajna and told him of the ways to attain it through jnana, bhakti, karma or raja yoga.”

17th January 1994, 5.33 pm

Two sadhus from Ayodhya arrive at the gate. Sri Swamiji had just emerged from the Vedi (altar) after completing his anusthan of *Sri Ramcharitarnanas* (contemplating on the auspicious life of Sri Rama) in three days. The sevak goes to the gate. The sadhus who were on their way to have the sacred bath at Ganga Sagar (the point where the Ganga merges into the ocean) on Makar Sankranti, stopped at Alakh Bara to have darshan of Sri Swamiji en route to Ganga Sagar. They gave their introduction and offered a kamandal (vessel carried by sadhu) of water from the holy Sarayu which flows through Ayodhya, the place for the birth of Rama in every Dwapar Yuga. The sevak received them and, after offering them the hospitality appropriate for sadhus, informed them darshan of Sri Swamiji would not be possible. Just then Sri Swamiji appeared from his mandap (raised platform with roof), besmeared with the bhasma he had applied on his body for Panchagni aradhana (worship). The sadhus dumbfounded at their good fortune rushed forward to prostrate at his feet. Sri Swamiji gave them upadesh on kundalini and seeing their lean and thin bodies and meagre belongings offered them food, clothing and shelter for the night. Seeing their blistered and cracked feet, Sri Swamiji gave them his own shoes for the journey to Ganga Sagar. The sadhus were overwhelmed. Puwal (hay) was laid for them in Gokul and they rested there. At night they sat around the dhuni and sang Hari bhajans for long hours and spoke of the glories of Ram Katha.

Namo Narayana.

—*Chronicler: Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati*

Could you tell us what relationship Paramahamsaji still has with his disciples? On what level is he in contact with us and does he still guide us? Is it still okay to direct our mental and emotional energies towards him without it disturbing his sadhana?

As to what relationship Paramahamsaji still has with his disciples, the answer is 'none', and he has stated that very clearly. He has also made it quite clear to everyone that he has now to tread a path where there should be no feeling of being something, for instance, being a guru with disciples. I feel that he has closed one chapter of his life and started another.

Regarding the physical identification of people as seekers, aspirants and disciples who consider him to be their guru (and he had to create that kind of image in order to guide them effectively) – that chapter is now closed!

It takes a lot of effort from the side of the guru to accept the weaknesses, the difficulties, the pain, the sufferings, the karmas and samskaras of people who have made him a guru. After having done that for such a long time the guru has to follow a certain lifestyle where he is able to discharge the accumulation of those influences of the ideas that have been imposed upon him.

That role of Paramahamsaji as guru stopped the day he surrendered his guru robes in front of his ishta devata at Triyambakeshwar. Paramahamsaji has said very clearly in many of his published writings that, with the removal of the guru robes in front of his ishta devata, he surrendered all and everything (including the karmas and samskaras of everyone that he might have accumulated) at the feet of his ishta devata.

After that, he became an avadhoot, a person who has now finally renounced the world with all its sensual and sensory attachments. Attachment to the ashram could also be considered as a sensory and sensual attachment. Attachment to the results of the work could also be considered a sensual attachment, providing a sense of fulfilment, happiness, satisfaction and contentment. So, by sensory and sensual

I mean every kind of interaction that one has in the world with other people and with objects of both a pleasurable and repulsive nature.

With that act of his at Tryambakeshwar he also surrendered himself, saying, "I am not now a person who moves by my own will, but I am ready to move at Your Will alone." The guru-disciple relationship which he carried with him on the psychic plane was thereupon dissolved. We were linked with him directly, but when he dissolved himself into his ishta devata, through him we also became linked to his ishta devata.

Paramahamsaji has actually taken us another step forward by saying, "Do not link with me, link with my ishta devata to whom I have surrendered." I do not know how many of you have caught onto this. Instead of being the conductor of your application to his Master, he has connected us (holding us in his hands) directly to his ishta devata.

I definitely still consider myself to be a disciple of Paramahamsaji and I am sure ninety-nine percent of his acquaintances, devotees, disciples and premis (those who feel love for him) also consider themselves to be his disciples.

Whatever the reason might be, there is definitely some quality that has joined us to him. As long as we are aware of that quality there will be a continuous growth through the guidance which is being received and which will be received in a cosmic or universal way (or whatever you want to call it) by picking up the frequencies that are being transmitted naturally and spontaneously.

There is another way of receiving guidance instead of asking him in meditation, or in our mind or spirit, just help him! You see, when a father or mother tries to earn something it may at first seem selfish to us that they are earning, but later on we realize that their effort was meant to make our lives better and more beautiful. Only later do we realize that the work they were doing was not for themselves but to maintain a continuity and to provide for a better way of life for future generations.

In a similar way, what Paramahamsaji is trying to do now may seem very harsh to us – “No visits to me! Do not talk to me! Do not think of me! Do not try to come and see me!” In the course of time, we will realize that such instructions were necessary in order to give him the freedom to earn whatever he wants to earn, for this will eventually go into our spiritual bank accounts. That effort, that direction in itself will become a source of guidance and inspiration for us.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

I am a sannyasin

There is an invitation from Paramahamsaji to all of you. This invitation is important because, as many of you have felt and known, after leaving the ashram and the establishment, Paramahamsaji cut himself off totally from everyone. He made it quite clear, saying to us that, “I do not wish to see anyone, I am not a guru or a teacher any more. I have no disciples any more.” This information came to us all. We felt isolated, deserted, neglected, and all these feelings and ideas surfaced, although, in fact, there was no reason to feel like this. What was actually happening, and this you have to understand from Paramahamsaji’s point of view, was that he never considered himself to be a guru or a teacher, rather, we made him into the image that suited us.

For many of us Paramahamsaji became a guru. For many of us he became a teacher, for many of us he became an inspirer. He took on different roles as per our projections, and that is how we related to him in our own ways. To be frank, we never allowed him to be himself. When he wanted to be himself, we reacted strongly and many people also reacted negatively. That was our shortcoming not his, because our ideas and projections were being shattered. Paramahamsaji always considered himself as a disciple of Swami Sivananda, as a sadhaka, as a spiritual aspirant. There are many things in his life which can totally alter a

human mind if you care to look deeply into his mind. His mind is always open for you to look into. It is not a closed mind.

At the time of his departure, Paramahamsaji said, “I did not take sannyasa to establish a mission. I did not take sannyasa to become a guru. When I took sannyasa, the original thought which motivated me was to know myself, but in order to come to that stage of realizing myself and in order to pave the path for my growth and evolution, I had to exhaust my samskaras and karmas. I asked Swami Sivananda what I should do in order to exhaust my samskaras and karmas and he gave me a mission to propagate yoga. I did that until I felt I had completely exhausted every impression or samskara and karma, even their shadow images, from my life. Finally the realization dawned on me that I was free from my karmas and samskaras and I also realized that now I would be able to go further in my own spiritual journey as an aspirant, as a sadhaka.”

Now, compare this mentality with other mentalities that you may have come across. In Paramahamsaji’s mentality we find clarity of direction. If we are able to use his example, we will also attain clarity of direction, rather than getting caught up in our ego trips and emotional trips. In fact, this is what he has taught all these years. Through the practices of yoga attain clarity of mind. Have we attained this clarity of mind? No. We have not been able to follow his guidance and direction, it is as simple as that. Despite our association with him for many years, for many decades, I do not think we have followed a single instruction of his for our inner growth and development.

Another source of inspiration is Paramahamsaji’s acceptance of life, his acceptance of difficulties and problems which would normally shake even the strongest of people. He has never fought against the current of life. He has flowed with the current of life. We fight with the current and struggle. We have not learnt to flow with the current. If a swimmer has to cross a river that is flowing strongly, he has

to swim with the current to try and reach the other shore. Now, this is a teaching of yoga, flowing with the current, which Paramahamsaji has been able to do and which we, as his disciples, have not been able to do. We are struggling now and when I return to Australia after one year we will still be struggling, and every year when I return I will find that we are still struggling. We miss the simple things in life and we do not give them consideration or importance.

In order to re-establish himself in the lifestyle of a sadhaka, it was necessary for Paramahamsaji to isolate himself from everything with which he identified. Paramahamsaji has no ego. He is egoless, but, for the sake of our understanding, let us say that he has dropped his identification and he has gone to another state of being, another state of life. His clarity of mind is just incredible.

Now he has given us this special opportunity by inviting all of us to his place in Deoghar, where he lives in solitude and isolation, without interacting with anyone, and continuously performing his higher sadhana. He has invited everyone to go there and to reconnect with him on a different dimension, on the true spiritual dimension and not just as a speculative, spiritual idea.

This invitation is open to all. You should not miss this opportunity, because if you do, and you still complain about your relationship with Paramahamsaji, what it is and how it is going to be, then that is your problem. He is opening his doors and it is up to you to enter and receive inspiration and inner guidance and stabilize yourself in your life. Learn to experience life as it should be experienced, not only in terms of luxury comfort, securities and satisfaction, but also see how the fire of *tapas*, austerity, can touch another person's life and transform it.

This year for one month, 18th November to 17th December, Paramahamsaji's doors are going to be open, and I insist that you do not miss this opportunity because it will be an eye-opener for all of you. I have come across many gurus, but I have never come across a true sadhaka, a true

aspirant, except for Paramahamsaji. I have come across many for whom the end has become the means, but I have never come across a person who has maintained that clear vision in life. When you speak to Paramahamsaji his ideas will come to you. Initially, I could not understand why he was leaving. I asked him at the time of his departure, “What will happen to you? You are leaving everything behind.”

He said in a beautiful way, “Look, let me be free from everything and from the lassos which you people throw at me. Let me just roam, wander around with the name of Shiva on my lips. It is my wish that when I die nobody will know that I have died. I am just a wave amongst thousands of waves in the ocean. When a wave reaches the shore it simply disappears. The same wave does not appear twice. The wave which you recognized as being me, the state which you recognized as a wave, is now finished. I am a sannyasin. I do not want my disciples around me at the time of my death with tears in their eyes, because that is not the teaching that I have given them. I do not want you people to stand beside my bed, with doctors stuffing pipes through my nostrils and my stomach. No, not at all. I want to live a free life, total freedom, external and internal both, keeping the knowledge alive in me that I am a sannyasin.”

Live like that sannyasin who has taught us many things but whose teachings we have never looked at. Take inspiration from that sannyasin who has always said, “No matter how many times you fall, always get up smiling and keep on walking.” Close your eyes. Do not just say, “It is beautiful.” Feel it in you, and when you feel that beauty in you, then I will consider my coming to Australia to have been a success.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, Australia, May 1994

The moment of dedication

Paramahamsaji has always said, “The greatest and most sublime moment in my life was the precise moment when I surrendered myself before my Guru, Swami Sivananda.”

Now, if we were in his place we would probably say, “The most happy moment of my life was when I became realized.” Would you not say that? However, Paramahamsaji does not say that. His dedication to his Guru has a greater place in his life than every kind of realization which he may have attained in the course of his future life. This shows the clarity of his vision, and that he never became caught up in the ego play of his attachments.

This beautiful expression coming from within him has been phrased very simply, “The moment of dedication is the moment which I cherish more than anything in my life.” Through this statement he is trying to make us aware, “Look here, do not be caught up in the ego trips which come after you attain something. Do not be caught up in the euphoria, in the happiness and joy that comes after attainment, but remember that you have a path to walk, and many miles to go before you rest.”

The most important thing is the drive, the motivation, the determination which you have, and which you had at the precise moment you started walking that path. Carry that spirit all the way through, till the very end, and go with that spirit for ever and ever!

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Lone traveller

Paramahamsaji was a traveller’s guide who was joined by other travellers on the way. When the fork in the road came, he turned off, and we continued walking.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

1995

Inspiration

In Sri Swamiji's old diary there is a story written. Once, when the Sun was setting he was feeling a bit sorrowful and was thinking, "When I have gone there will be darkness in the world. Who will give them Light?" Then he saw that in one corner of the Earth a small flame was shining. The flame said to the Sun, "O God, I can see your concern clearly in your face. Even though I am very small, I can definitely try, in your absence, to always shine according to my ability. I will try to fight with the darkness." When the Sun heard this he blessed the flame and said, "Wherever you shine you will spread light."

We can try to illumine ourselves according to our ability and we can fight the darkness which is spreading nowadays in society and the world, which is not only ignorance but is also a darkness of the emotions of humankind. In this progression there is only one way to give light and that is seva. This is the inspiration that I received from Sri Swamiji.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Go with the force

You have asked me why Paramahamsaji has called you for darshan. I am sure that you will all be able to pick up the reason according to your own thoughts, ideas, beliefs and

receptivity. You are trying to find out the how and why of a connection that is actually a transmission from the heart, not a transmission from the mind.

Externally there can be many reasons why Paramahamsaji has called you. One reason could be that he has completed five years of his Panchagni sadhana, the sadhana of five fires. In the higher vedic tradition, the five fires are the fires which burn internally in the form of anger, attachment, passion, desire, ego, etc. Human beings are constantly being burned by these fires. It has been stated in the scriptures, more specifically in the tantric than the vedic traditions, that those people who have gone beyond the mind, who have overcome the material aspect of their lives and minds, can subdue both the five fires, internal and external, and gain command over the elements of nature.

Paramahamsaji is a person who always used to avoid heat, and always lived in a very comfortable environment. But when he started to perform his sadhana he had to handle the heat of the fires with temperatures ranging beyond eighty degrees celsius. He does that in summer, from January until the end of June, in the hottest part of the year. In these extreme climatic conditions, he sits with four fires around him and the fire actually scorches his body. Many times after performing his sadhana, his body is like burnt copper, but while he is sitting there for eight hours, he is totally oblivious to everything that is happening around him. Funnily enough, there is no dehydration, no negative symptoms of this extreme exposure to the heat. If we tried to sit in the sun for even three hours, we would have high blood pressure and dehydration.

So, how can a person have such an ability to sustain heat, to absorb heat and not be affected by it? Definitely there must be some form of control of the elements, of the *tattvas*. It has been stated in the scriptures that only when a person is able to manage the heat of the fires externally, does it become possible to transcend the mind. So, from his type of sadhana it can be said that he has mastery over the natural elements.

In the process of this Panchagni sadhana, the body eventually converts into light. Sadhus and swamis usually identify with fire more than with any other element. You will find very few sadhus who identify with earth, because earth has a very strong attraction or pull for mooladhara. You will find very few sadhus who identify with water, because water is never stable; it always flows from top to bottom. It represents the transformation of the divine nature into the mundane, manifest nature.

Very few sadhus and swamis identify with air because air is never stable, and to become as vast as the sky is the last stage of infinity. All the sadhus, from the beginning of the tradition, have worshipped fire. Not because of some mystical or religious belief, but because fire is one element which is pure in essence, luminous, warm, bright. Fire has the ability to consume everything and remain unaffected. So in the sannyasa tradition, fire or flame is generally seen as a symbol of spirit. Once you identify with the nature, the symbol of spirit, the total identification helps one to transcend the physical, material dimension.

For the past five years, Paramahamsaji has just been adapting himself to this sadhana which he is doing now. It has been a rehearsal for a bigger sadhana which is yet to come. We do not know what the new sadhana will be. There is a possibility that Paramahamsaji will take a sankalpa and not see anyone at all for some time. It could be three years, ten years, fifteen years. That sankalpa will be as per his choice. Since people know where he is, they try to go there whenever possible and that disturbs him. Although he does not see anyone, still the disturbance is there. So another reason he has allowed you this darshan could be in order to pacify your minds, so that once again he can isolate himself and go into a deeper sadhana.

Paramahamsaji has always had the ability to pick up the environment of the world and he has instinctively reacted to the demands of the environment, to the necessities of the present-day life. Even his desire, or his mission to teach yoga was due to

the necessities that humanity could face in the future, because thirty years ago, nobody, even in India, accepted yoga as we accept it today. In fact, I would say that there was even greater resistance to yoga in India than there was in other countries. Overseas countries could identify with yoga as a physical or mental practice. However, in India, people identified yoga with something mystical, which would isolate them from society, and nobody wanted to be isolated, but Paramahamsaji was a visionary and he was able to assess the needs of people in the future. He worked instinctively for the propagation of yoga and now he must see a different need for people in the future.

In fact, this has been my experience too. This year, for the first time in eleven years, I travelled outside India and I noticed a big change in the mentality. Whether in Australia or Europe, people who once looked to yoga as a physical system, are now looking to yoga to take them beyond the concepts and identity of the body.

No doubt there are many people still attracted to hatha yoga and raja yoga, but there is an increasing interest in the deeper aspect of yoga, which goes beyond the physical. I felt strongly that people needed a clearer direction by which they could come to understand and use their inner faculties more and more. Not faculties in the form of *siddhis* or psychic powers, but the normal day-to-day human qualities of caring, nurturing and sustaining, of understanding and being at peace with oneself and with others.

From the past five years I have noticed that in Paramahamsaji's sadhana the concept of how to incorporate the qualities of love, affection, compassion and devotion are subtly coming to the forefront. In his own way he is trying to teach us how to develop these four qualities, so that we can be more at peace with ourselves, and more creative in our lives. When we say develop love, develop compassion, develop this, develop that, the question always arises, "How do we do it?" The love that we are expressing now, is it not enough? The affection or compassion that we are expressing now, is not enough? Even in these expressions, we tend to involve our egos, attachments,

ambitions and desires, and the purity of the quality is never experienced. Rather, the more we worry about it, it seems the more we distance ourselves from the purity and from the essence. There is too much ego-identification.

As part of our training, I believe that Paramahamsaji is trying to teach us, by being an example, by being the symbol, how we can cultivate those qualities within us, so that eventually we can make this world a better place for ourselves and for future generations to come. So, if you can pick up what he is trying to give you on a subtle level, you will see that it is very similar to what I have just said. I am not going to say that it will be the same because it is my understanding and feeling; yours may be different. What I have picked up is according to my nature, what you will pick up will be according to your nature.

We have identified and linked ourselves emotionally with a person having or representing some state which we want to achieve in life. We have identified with a body, an image, a concept. I feel that now he is trying to make us identify with the essence which has kept him ticking all this time. So it is like he is saying, “Don’t look at the body, but look at the force which has kept this body going in a particular direction, on a particular path, and identify with that force rather than with a personality.”

If you can identify with that force, you will immediately attain bhakti. God as the universal force has two powers. One is maya which takes us away from the nature of God, and the other is bhakti which brings us closer to the nature of God. Many of us come to sannyasa because of the force of maya. We do not come with a spontaneous feeling in the heart but because we want to become something. We do not adopt sannyasa as a transit to another level. But sannyasa offers an opportunity, because even though you may come with an ambition, whether for power or wisdom, at the same time you should be aware that there is a higher force guiding you. When the awareness of that higher force comes, the process of bhakti begins.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

1996

Tantric ritual and the yajna

Extract

As long as the flame, the jyoti, receives oxygen, it will burn. If you cut off the oxygen supply it will go out. The shraddha, bhakti and faith of those present work as the oxygen. The chanting, the pooja and the atmosphere that develops there is the jyoti. The brilliance and grandeur of the jyoti depends on how much oxygen you feed it. People cannot understand this. For those in the villages such an event becomes a fair and for the city dwellers, a party. People do not understand the spiritual link with such an event.

The yajna was special in many ways, the main one being that a realized saint was present – a siddha saint. Guess who?

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Impressions of the yajna

When the invitation to the yajna first arrived at Satyananda Yoga Centre in London, my immediate reaction was one of great joy at the prospect of seeing my beloved Guru again. As I continued to read, I was delighted to discover that this yajna was, in some way, celebrating the feminine, the Divine in its female aspect. As I had been planning to take six months away from the Centre, for myself, by myself,

and prepare for the next decade and my progress towards Cronehood – a kind of Menopausal Vision Quest – this invitation seemed to offer the perfect start to such a venture.

I was not disappointed. However, it will take a long time to fully digest this experience and to assess the subtle yet powerful transformation that has surely taken place in all of us who were there.

At the time of writing, my mind is full of a myriad of colourful images, dominated by red and pink and flowers and more flowers. Amongst the flowers, my Beloved, moving here and there; on one level aware of everything going on around him, talking, laughing, gesticulating, dancing, giving garlands, and on another level he was perhaps sitting on Mount Kailash, a million miles from Rikhia, perfectly still and at one with the universe. When I looked at him and experienced his Shiva aspect, it was more than I could bear and I had to close my eyes, only to be filled to overflowing with such intensity of feeling that I almost wished I could close my heart as easily as my eyes. Each day he continued to give me more and more and still more – the sound of his voice calling my name, kneeling before him as he placed a garland of flowers around my neck, his wonderful satsang on women, his tenderness with the children as he drew them to him to join the dance, and on another occasion asking the women to join him as he danced the dance of Shiva, and again his little conversations with his neighbours as they came forward, rather shyly, to receive their rickshaws, carts and bicycles – it was, and is, endless.

On many occasions I found myself wondering if the extraordinary diversity of people and their activities was a ‘normal’ part of a yajna? Are the local drummers always invited to add their heartbeat to the rather mechanical precision of the pandits’ chanting? Are women and foreigners normally allowed to participate in the arati? As Paramahansa Satyanandaji himself explained, the presence of a young married woman at the Kanya Kumari Pooja was breaking new ground, making a very powerful statement to

women in India and worldwide. What a beautiful ceremony that was, with the enchanting little girls in their colourful attire, their painted toes being tenderly washed and dried by the long, slim fingers of Swami Niranjana, their timidity gradually dissolving in the warmth of his smile, as he fulfilled his role with perfect naturalness and humility.

It seems to me that the underlying message of the yajna was that of oneness, unity in and through diversity. Ultimately, we are all one, and on a practical, everyday level we can also function harmoniously together, treating each other with respect and affection, whatever the more orthodox folk may feel. I pray that they will allow themselves to be touched by this message, and open up to the presence of the Divine in the whole human race, not just as a theory, but as a living reality.

Before coming to Rikhiya I had not realized that the yajna was also an important initiation for Swami Niranjana, and amongst the many powerful and touching memories of him during those days, I would like to mention just two, which I hope will stay with me forever. I was privileged to be sitting nearby when Swami Niranjana did full pranama to his mother, Swami Dharmashakti and to Swami Atmananda, in a gesture of such humility and tenderness that it took my breath away. And this was preceded by what I felt was the most extraordinary, beautiful and potent event of the whole yajna – when my beloved Swamiji handed over the symbols of his authority, the crystal shivalinga and crystal mala, to my beloved Crown Prince. At this moment I finally understood that spiritually they are indeed one. Time stood still as a few tears slowly trickled down Swami Niranjana's cheeks, the only visible movement between them.

—Swami Pragya-murti Saraswati,
Acharya Satyananda Yoga Centre, London, UK

Process of diksha

The most significant part of the yajna for me was being in the presence of Paramahamsaji again. For many of us, particularly from the West, having heard stories of his life in seclusion and his concentration on his sadhana, it would be easy to imagine him as having become withdrawn and introspective. What I saw, however, was an incandescent fireball, fairly crackling with energy! He is the very embodiment of dynamism, still with his immense good humour and attention to detail, and awareness of the minutiae of our daily lives.

His energy seemed to affect everybody. Each morning, as all the helpers went about their duties in preparation for the day's program, nobody seemed to walk. Everybody ran! And not only that, they ran cheerfully!

Another source of inspiration was in watching Swami Niranjan at work. As the chief performer of the yajna, he was required to be present and active in all the many hours of pooja and ceremony involved in the yajna rites, and as well as that, he was working from before dawn to late at night each day, overseeing the arrangements, carrying out his many duties, and acting as a Master of Ceremonies in between parts of the program, providing bilingual explanations on what was happening. Somehow he seemed to find the time to also give personal attention to so many people. Never before have I seen such giving.

I had a similar impression of Swami Satsangi. She was everywhere at once, unfailing in her patience and care for people, whatever their backgrounds or their demands, tireless, friendly and always compassionate.

When the yajna was over and we had returned to Ganga Darshan, I felt that something in me had been profoundly changed, and when I looked at the faces of others who had been there, people from all over the world and from all walks of life, I could see that change reflected there too. It seems to me that all of us who had come together for this time, whether physically or in spirit, have been through a process of diksha. Perhaps you could say we have been splashed with the droplets

from Swami Niranjan's diksha! And that is a transformative process which will manifest in some shape or form in the lives of each and every one of us in our vast, extended, global family.

—*Swami Muktimurti Saraswati, Australia*

The gift of a goal and a sadhana

History was made at Rikhia. A hundred years back Swami Vivekananda did Kanya Pooja at Kanya Kumari in secrecy. In this century it is the first time Kanya Pooja has been held, and in the tantric tradition this is the first time it has been held publicly. Swami Vivekananda gave us the message of Vedanta, Swami Sivananda gave us the message of yoga, and Swami Satyananda gave us the message of tantra. Swami Vivekananda gave us the goal which we have to reach, Swami Sivananda showed us the path which we have to walk, and now Paramahamsaji has accelerated the process by opening up the tantric practices to everyone. So history was made at Rikhia in the tantric tradition, in the spiritual tradition.

I was allocated a job in the yajnasala and as I am from South India, I was watching the pandits closely. We have to give them full marks. One hundred percent perfection should be there and the pandits followed all the rules and regulations meticulously. In South India the brahmanical power is very strong. Knowledge gives power and this power and authority can be misused, but the pandits who conducted this ceremony had not only knowledge and humbleness, but real wisdom.

In those few days I feel that Swami Satyananda gave us two things. One is the goal we have to reach. By rubbing two pieces of wood together, the fire is created with which we burn all our sins and in that fire we surrender our individuality. That is the real symbolism behind the yajna – surrendering ourselves totally. For that he also gave us a very simple sadhana: begin the day with *Sri Ram Jaya Ram*. It looks very simple but it is most difficult.

—*Swami Sureshwarananda Saraswati, BSY*

A firework

The most remarkable event of the yajna for me was the total presence of Paramahamsaji, my Guru. For the last few years he has been a little inaccessible and unfamiliar. But this time he was absolutely, completely here with each one of us, no matter how unimportant. Dipping into his memory he recalled an anecdote, a name, a place. He had an ‘eye’ on everything – a chair for an old lady, toilets, a seat for everyone – and he supervised the whole ritual. I have seen my Guru as a conductor of the symphony of life. The amazing and complex Devi worship unfolded like an ancient story, as if we were being projected into the memory of humanity. The adoration of the nine virgins was, for me, the shock between innocence and knowledge, learning and surrender. Paramahamsaji was like a firework exploding into a thousand stars, lively and joyful, deep and mysterious. It was a unique show.

—*Swami Devanath Saraswati, France*

Pictures to preserve

Paramahamsaji made me a film-maker at Rikhia. The experiences of a film-maker are always subjective, never objective. Never before have I seen three such beautiful faces. There is no camera that can hold such pictures. There are no eyes that can behold such beautiful faces. One is of Paramahamsaji. I have seen every pore, every detail of his face, all the different expressions. And I have seen Swamiji in some very intense moments. I thought I also felt it sometimes. And the Devi – there was no statue, but she looked so alive that I can never forget it.

On the day when Paramahamsaji was garlanding the acharyas and the senior swamis of the BSY family, he suddenly looked back and said, “Hey, how did I forget you. Come, come, come.” Then he said to me, “Your heart is your camera and your two eyes are your lens. Whatever pictures you take, preserve them there.” It was a beautiful

moment. He also blessed me, keeping his hand on my head.

As for taking a resolve, I forgot that we had to do so. I sat in front of the Devi every day, looking at her, getting spun out. I never knew what was going to happen next, but something would prompt me to turn my head to the other side. I would see something interesting happening and run there with my camera.

We have been given a lot more than we could ever have expected. I have never received so much love in my life and I don't know if I will ever receive it again. Irrespective of anyone's status, Paramahamsaji gave everything to everybody. He tried to relate to everybody who came before him on their plane.

—*Swami Yogavijay Saraswati, BSY*

In the best of hands

I think that everything I've experienced up to this point in my life was a preparation for what I experienced at the Sat Chandi Yajna. It has changed my life and will probably continue to do so as I carry on my ashram life – just seeing Paramahamsaji in his relaxed fashion, Swami Niranjan going about his duties, flowing with the cosmic vibrations, and everyone just melting in to form the whole event. We have all been affected in different ways and our awareness has been awakened to different levels. I feel very privileged to be a part of this wonderful global family. As Paramahamsaji says we are moving on now, we are in the second generation, we are looking for that new inspiration and drive. I feel that it is going to take a little time for me to come back to earth, settle and then go on steadily towards the new century. I feel very excited about this – we couldn't be in better hands.

—*Swami Gyanprayag Saraswati, Australia*

Akhara pacified

There were many memorable moments. One was the karma yoga. For the first time I experienced a sense of timelessness and desirelessness. Doing work for the guru to the best of one's ability, one can have this experience and feel blissful.

The classical vocal music on the first day was like a triveni, with the music in praise of the Mother, the blessings of the Mother and the blessings of Paramahamsaji. Pandit Jas Raj, the vocal maestro, wanted to continue singing bhajans, and Swami Satsangi took us inside the Akhara. After some time I came out and looked around. Paramahamsaji saw me from a distance. I was standing in darkness, so he said, "Is that Rishiputra? What are you doing there?" He was not expecting me to be there in those quarters at that time. I said, "Swamiji, we are singing bhajans here in the Akhara." He said, "You mean to say you are inside the Akhara?" "Yes," I replied, and Paramahamsaji said instantly, "So you people have pacified my Akhara." His love, his compassion and his greatness are without any bounds, without any limits.

—*Sannyasi Rishiputra, Calcutta*

Time to change

I was part of the organizing gang and it was my privilege to be working at close quarters with Paramahamsaji. While we were working he would give instructions and advice. Some things really sank in. One day he said, "The aim is not to be precise, but to be perfect." I thought for some time about what he meant. So it was a continuous satsang for us. I really don't know how much I have understood, but on a few occasions I could feel a thrill, especially when the yajna fire was lit. I could see how the fire was built up just by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The purity of it really struck me.

—*Swami Vigyanchaitanya Saraswati, BSY*

Ten wonderful days at Rikhia

Extracts

On arrival at Alakh Bara on 22nd November at 3 pm, we saw the final touches being given to the pooja mandapam and the pandal under the direct guidance of Paramahansa Niranjan (popularly known as Swamiji). As we entered the main gate, Swamiji's eagle eyes spotted us and we were introduced to Paramahamsaji, who was giving an informal satsang to devotees. He was his usual old self, frank, free and fearless in his expression, very practical in his outlook and approach to life and mixing readily and informally with the gathering. There were no self-created barriers between him and the devotees this time.

Throughout the yajna he could be seen here, there and everywhere, wading through the crowd like a real avadhoot, in his majestic style. This was a sudden departure from his previous public appearances at Alakh Bara since 1989, but a welcome sign, appreciated by one and all. As Paramahamsaji himself says, "We sannyasins happen to be monarchs without crowns," and sure enough he is one such royal personality. Of course, he is on a different and much higher plane now, a step further in his spiritual attainments in the current incarnation. We could see, feel and experience his closeness to God Almighty. It goes without saying that he always was, is and will ever remain a monarch in our hearts. I wish we could tear open our hearts in the present Kali Yuga to prove the point like Hanuman did during his era.

All the arrangements were simply flawless, magnificent, considering the magnitude of the Mahayajna. Swamiji's involvement could be felt everywhere, overseeing or conducting each and every ritual and event with perfection, despite being a *yajnaman*, chief performer of the yajna. And, of course, Swami Satsangi was hovering around here, there and everywhere. One could see, feel and experience a real Kali or Chandi form in her black robe, as she moved about relentlessly, always on her toes, without any rest or relief. What a capacity for karma yoga she has.

From the next day onwards Paramahamsaji gave morning satsang. He put us wise about the significance of organizing such a Mahayajna: transferring his spiritual attainments to Swami Niranjan, declaring him to be his successor, and Guru to all of us on the global level; bringing gifts of all type for further distribution to his neighbours, and other practical aspects of life. Despite his total surrender to God as His servant and only bhakti pouring from his lips, I wonder if people can afford to look directly into his piercing, sparkling and twinkling eyes. Maybe a very few close disciples dare to do that. Paramahamsaji once again emphasized the need to perform our sacred duty or *dharma* towards society, especially the sannyasins, for the upliftment and wellbeing of the masses.

—Sannyasi Srimukhananda, Jaipur

Immortal flower

Extracts

Be a flower that doesn't dry up, that doesn't get crushed underfoot. There are so many flowers in the world that get crushed. Only a few people have become immortal flowers, accepted by the world and by God. The way to become an immortal flower is to follow these three principles in life – control over speech, mind and ego. Immortal flowers in the modern age whose fragrance has permeated everywhere are Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, Baba Nityananda and Swami Sivananda, and we have smelt the freshest fragrance during the Chandi Yajna in the form of Swami Satyananda. So try to be like an immortal flower, not like the ones which die after a few hours of life. That is sannyasa.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Maintaining inspiration in ashram and sannyasa life

Extracts

It is important not to lose the inspiration with which we first arrive. The only example I can find of someone who has not lost that original inspiration is Paramahamsaji. We come with inspiration but then, when we get caught up in the external situations and circumstances, the purity of that inspiration is lost to us. Maybe the inspiration continues, but it is definitely not pure and it doesn't give us the same strength and stamina to deal with the existing situations and conditions. I became aware of Paramahamsaji's inspiration when he sent a message for the Tyag Golden Jubilee Convention. The message was: 'I still hold dear to my heart and cherish the moment of dedication, fifty years ago, when I surrendered myself to my guru, Swami Sivananda.' This shows a mentality which has always remembered the beginning and not the end.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Inner link

The real connection between guru and disciple is the feeling and respect which the aspirant has for the guru. You have to look beyond your conceived impressions, ideas and feelings in order to truly connect with the guru. You have to respect what the guru has done to change your present pattern of life. If real feeling and respect are there, the connection with the guru is felt all the time. Even if you are thousands of miles away, you do not feel a vacuum or emptiness or the absence of a link, of guidance or support.

I have lived very little with Paramahamsaji. I left his side when I was eleven years old and stayed away from him until I was twenty-two. In between I only saw him a couple of times and stayed with him for only a few months. There were times when I didn't see him at all for five or six years. I never missed him. Later on I wondered why, because here

in the ashram I saw people coming with hopes of living close to a master and they would try to see him every day, even if only for a short time – just a glimpse, if not a chat or a discussion or a lecture. But just a glimpse was enough. To me that was an imposed attachment by the disciple in relation to the guru. I could never understand it because I had never experienced it.

Not only that, I was very critical of Paramahamsaji because he had given me freedom. When I was leaving India, he said, “Look, you are going abroad. I don’t want to hold you as a sannyasin. If you want to live abroad, get married, study, work, you have my permission. I won’t stop you.” And that really went deep inside me. I thought to myself, “This person is giving me total freedom to lead my life as I want.” He is not saying, “Look, if you don’t behave yourself I’ll call you back, take off your geru and disrobe you.” There was nothing like that.

I analyzed him critically over a period of years. I came in contact with many great gurus, famous ones, realized ones, and I always used to compare them with Paramahamsaji. I found that there were certain qualities in Paramahamsaji which attracted me, which I aspired to attain, which became the aim in my life. I didn’t feel his absence at all, not even for a day. Now I attribute that to being able to accept my circumstances, my company, my life, my environment. There was no struggle. When we are not able to accept our environment, company and situation, at that time we encounter difficulties with ourselves.

I did not experience any loss of a link. I must have had some good previous karmas or samskaras not to have gone through that stage, the experience of attachment and the desire to run and be with the person I liked. It is due to my good karma and I’m very happy about it. In this stage I found a deep inner feeling. No matter what anyone said about Paramahamsaji, my feelings remained unchanged. If somebody said, “Swamiji is a very nice person,” I would say, “Yes, he is. There is no doubt about it. I have seen that

niceness in him.” I did not feel elated in any way; rather it confirmed my realization. If somebody said, “Oh, he’s a such a strict disciplinarian that I left the ashram,” I would say, “Yes, I have seen that in him, but it hasn’t bothered me because I accept that side as well.” So even his strict disciplinarian nature did not affect me in the negative way that it affected many people.

There was acceptance of the company, situations, life, events, environment, people, guru, father, mother, and so on. Many times we don’t accept the actions, beliefs and thoughts of our father, mother, brothers and sisters or of other people. This is where the problem lies. So aspire to develop a deep inner feeling and respect. Make sure that these two things are your personal treasures and don’t allow anyone to touch them. Then you will feel the presence all the time.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Mouna

Extract

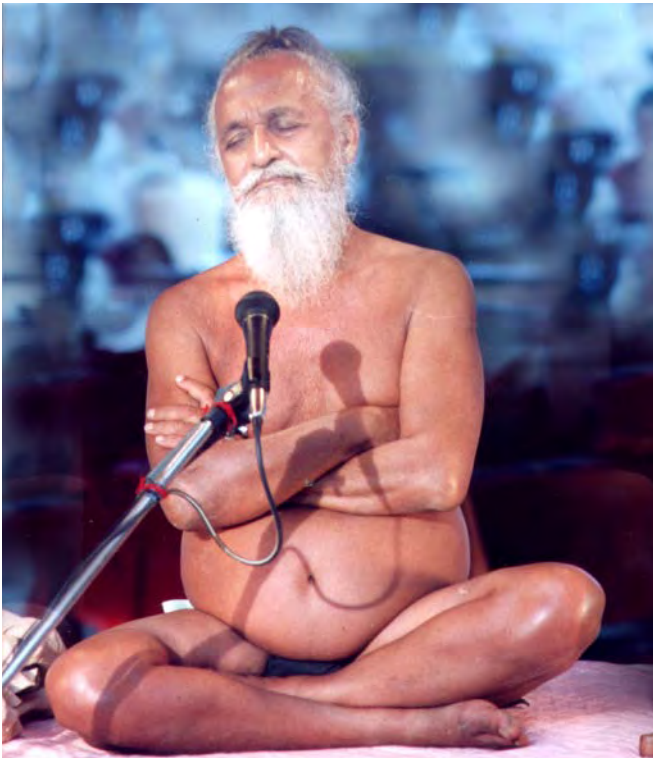
My introduction to mouna was slightly different to the mouna now being practised in the ashrams. Before I took sannyasa I was quite talkative, so at every opportunity I would go and talk to Paramahamsaji. He was always available and there were ample opportunities to go and speak with him. As the time came close for my sannyasa initiation, I remember asking him, “Will my relationship with you change after taking sannyasa, because I like it the way it is.” He said, “Yes, it will change, it will deepen.”

I knew I had no choice, so after the initiation I went to speak with Paramahamsaji as I had been doing in the past. I said, “Swamiji, I know you have a lot on your mind just at this moment, but could I bring your attention to this particular subject?” He replied, “I have nothing in my mind.” The conversation was cut. It created a feeling of

mouna within me; I could not speak. Nothing in his mind! I did not know how to relate to that. It took me a few days to recover from this experience.

Then I went to Paramahamsaji, on a very hot day, and said, “Swamiji, do you want some water?” His reply was, “I want nothing.” Again the conversation was cut. So in little instances like that, he trained me in a system of mouna. My extroverted mind had to turn inside and start to really see what was going on, how I was really thinking, how I was structuring sentences and how I was using words. This was a very powerful period of time.

—*Swami Sivamurti Saraswati,
Acharya, Satyanandashram Hellas, Greece*



1997

The message of yoga

Extract

The moment we begin to follow a sequence in yoga and integrate that sequence into our life, a very beautiful experience takes place. As Paramahamsaji says in his own words, “Life is a flowering mystery and every unfoldment is beautiful.” We do not know how a flower actually unfolds from the bud; it is a mystery of life, a cosmic mystery. Every unfoldment in life is beautiful. Nature follows a system, God follows a system, the whole universe is based on a system. That system is positive; it is not negative. It is a positive system which leads one through the process of evolution to the total experience of enlightenment.

We make plans for our lives without trying to change ourselves when we encounter a new situation. As Paramahamsaji says, we do not have a contingency plan. These are the words that Paramahamsaji always uses. We act in life without a contingency plan. There has to be planning as well as preparation to meet the arising situations of life. If I am going somewhere and during the journey it begins to rain, then what will happen? So, I need to take an umbrella or a raincoat. If that planning is not there and it begins to rain when I am out, my trip will be spoiled.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Living ritual in Rikhia

Extracts

The whole of Ram Naam Aradhana was a living ritual. We partook of Paramahamsaji's munificence and the concrete example of right living at the Akhara. Whatever will help people was there to see – the farm which grows trees whose wood goes to the villagers, the cowshed where villagers come to learn how to care for the cow before being given one, the simple life and vegetable gardens, pure water, no mosquitoes, silent starry nights. Everything in its right time and place. The things we needed – discipline, duty, simplicity, good work, good clean fun, working with others for others – were all there in a natural way.

Afterwards no one spoke of seeing bright lights or earth shattering phenomenon. Some said they had felt so at home that they didn't want to leave. Others felt so satisfied that they were happy to go back where they came from. One householder said, "Before Rikhia I felt in conflict because I thought I could only find spiritual life in an ashram and not with my family. Now I know that for me it is with my husband and children and so I'm happy to go home."

In Rikhia, Paramahamsaji gave us the two keys to the open secret. He shared with us his sadhana which he said had brought him closer to God – singing the name of God and serving in the world. Work and worship – nothing new, but he did not just tell us, he made us do it. He gave us the experience. Everyday for one month working together and celebrating the name of God with every sense – singing, dancing, satsang – until in the evenings the consciousness melted into night without the mosquitoes of the mind to disturb the starry sky.

—*Swami Dharmananda Saraswati, Australia*

Our Wonderful Swamiji

There is an ashram in Rikhia very well known,
Made of mud and shining stone.
Living there is a wonderful saint,
Cheerful, lively and very quaint.
He has been there for about ten years,
To him his dog is very dear.
The name of the dog is Bholenath,
Who shows no selfishness or swarth.
Blessings pour down from Swamiji's eyes,
This saint is of course extremely wise.
People love him and so do we,
He cares for us so lovingly.

His eyes show a lesson we should learn,
We give him our love and he gives us his in return.
His blessings are our main concern
They make the lives of people turn.

—*Divya Poddar, Calcutta,*
Age 11 years

The experience of a lifetime

Extracts

Ram Naam Aradhana was the experience of a lifetime. Paramahansa Satyananda was himself resplendent in his style of dress and address. He is God's servant and just gives to his neighbours whatever comes to Prasad Kutir.

People came from all around the world to hear and see the wonder of Bharata, the leading light of India; to reconnect and recharge with guru's grace for the coming years ahead; to hear from his lips that, 'If conflict and confusion are a part of your life, know that you are growing spiritually.'

Paramahamsaji's words are ringing in our ears, 'Love your neighbours as yourself,' a simple message of Vedanta.

—*Swami Hridayananda Saraswati, Australia*

Snippets from Paramahamsaji

Extracts

“My parents planted the seed of Vishishta Advaita in my mind and I kept on walking that path. I was a very big fool. Only now have I come to understand the truth. Love Rama. He only wants love from you. Nothing else. Uncork a bottle before you throw it into the sea of spirituality. Unless you live for others the bottle remains corked. Nothing will go in. The debate between form and formlessness is useless. The same Rama is with form as well as formless. There is one aspect of Rama which is with form – the Rama who is the son of Dasharatha. The same Rama also exists without form, as the doer, as the all-pervasive and as the transcendental. You can choose the aspect that you feel will work for you. Of all these, it is my experience that the aspect of Rama with form, as the son of King Dasharatha, is the easiest, cheapest, surest and safest.”

And so flowed the distilled essence of Paramahamsaji's life experience. Can there be anything in life more valuable than receiving this – and from he himself! One completely lost awareness of oneself when his leela began. That was how mesmerizing the show was. He is a star performer – a prajaranjak, the entertainer of the kingdom, he called himself, dismissing all that was happening around him as mere entertainment. Maybe it was so for him. For us, however, every drop was life-giving.

His hard hitting cynicism and irreverence for falsities and facades has lost none of its sharp edge. If anything, it is sharper than ever before. Very often one saw him wipe his tears during performances especially where women were the focus. Often lost in a performance, his face mirrored the emotions of the performer, innocent like a child.

On the way back to Munger, I had my usual unilateral conversation with Lord Rama. “Thank you,” I said. “I now know that you perpetually bestow grace on me. In the past it was not always evident. But how can I doubt it now when you have sent me into Parmahamsaji’s mantle of love and protection! For me there can be no bigger symbol or evidence of your grace. Through him on the earthly plane, I feel you, my Lord. Thank you.”

—*Sannyasi Karmadhara*

Apprenticeship in prasad kutir

Extract

The linchpin of all the experiences I had during Ram Naam Aradhana was Paramahamsaji. In the mornings, while overseeing the work going on in different parts of the Akhara, he would give short, sharp satsangs in response to the bits of life being lived around him. Always to the point, they resonated with all privileged enough to hear them, with a universal but practical relevance. In the afternoons we all basked in his presence and tried to absorb the gift of wisdom he imparted. At the same time, without ever leaving the Alakh Bara, he was intimately involved with the work being done in the villages. His approach to ‘helping his neighbours’ is so impressive and once again we have been presented with every reason to respect and admire him.

—*Swami Matrikananda Saraswati, UK*

Recipe for a normal life

In the presence of Paramahamsaji I always have the same feeling – this is normal life. Everything seems to be so easy – no past, no future, no plans, no wishes, no illness – no problems! Acceptance of life in every breath. I remember having that feeling once before as a child. One simple afternoon my mother was sewing, my grandmother was

knitting, my father was reading and I was playing quietly. That fulfilling silence was normal life. Now I have to cross half the earth to come here and live a normal life again for a month or two. Paramahamsaji prescribed a recipe for a normal life: remembrance of God's name and work. That's all.

—*Sannyasi Omgyanam, Yugoslavia*

The nearness of God

Extract

There was the wonderful sight of Paramahamsaji's radiant body, bronze in the early morning sun doing daily walkabouts just as in the old days. One morning he came to the weaving department where I was doing karma yoga, stopped in front of me, looked with such happiness into my eyes and said, "Isn't this lovely work, you like to do it?" I heard my voice make some affirmative reply as every cell in my body seemed to inflate with prana. Never in my entire life was I so eager to get on with the weaving. In true Satyananda fashion, the next day the weaving department closed!

Being at close range to him during midday satsang, his humour, wisdom and bhakti succinctly hitting the nail on the head with every subject that came up for discussion as only a true Satyam can. One split second direct eye contact infused such a wealth of inspiration – pure grace flowing through a very great free spirit. Every gesture, word and attitude in innocence verifying that he is a living breathing expression of all that he has ever taught us.

Sometimes during chanting from the stage a spontaneous rumbling groan of bhakti would come across Paramahamsaji's microphone and many times he joined in with chanting.

—*Swami Sattwamurti Saraswati, Ireland*

Jnana

Extract

Everybody, whether a student in a classroom or a citizen ruled by a government, wants an ideal person at the helm of affairs. The Bhagavad Gita tells us there is nothing more important than jnana. However, this jnana is not available in supermarkets or in bound books or in museums. It is available only with live souls like Paramguru Satyananda, who is sitting here with us. That is why you all leave your homes, your countries and come here and search, because only after constant querying persistent humility can you gain jnana.

—Premaditi (Dr Prema Pandurang), Madras

Education for life

Extracts

You have been with Swami Satyananda from childhood?

Since the age of four.

And he was, or is, your mother and father?

Yes, that has been my relationship with him.

Did you ever, as a child, feel that you had missed something?

Never. I felt, rather, that I was privileged because I had every kind of opportunity to develop and to grow, opportunities which I don't see many other people having, even in affluent families.

How did he teach you?

He taught me through yoga. He taught me many subjects by taking me into a relaxed, meditative state through the practice of yoga nidra. That also opened up the receptive nature of my personality, so I did not have any difficulty in

imbibing topics, subjects, themes, with which I came into contact.

—*Interview with Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati by Sangeeta Advani, Bombay Times, Mumbai*

High on Waves

I can't say if I,
like many other warrior sannyasins,
can propagate zealously
the spiritual tradition of my beloved Gurudeva,
but that has been my cherished motivation.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



1998

Perfection of sadhana

One cannot define perfection. Perfection is an ongoing process, and if one defines perfection in any way then one has totally missed the point. If one considers that a miracle is making God do one's bidding, that is wrong. When we pray, "Oh God, please allow this to happen," and that thing happens, we say, "A miracle has taken place. I was able to convince God to do my bidding."

I have come to an understanding that the real miracle takes place when one lives according to the will of God. This is what I have seen in the life of Paramahamsaji and in the sadhana which he is performing even today, as a sannyasin and as a disciple. The flowering of that sadhana within him has gone far beyond the state of samadhi. He has reintegrated himself with the world, with society, with people, from the dimension of the pure mind. I am convinced that this is how yoga sadhana must culminate in our life. Isolation, no. Integration, yes.

This integration is comprised of four aspects:

1. Love, or *prem*, which is not a conditioned love or an expectant love, but an unconditioned, universal love.
2. Affection, or *sneha*, which does not have a motive, but is a natural state of being.

3. Compassion, or *karuna*, which is not for the sake of gaining name, fame or recognition, but which becomes a natural expression of the human personality.
4. Devotion, or *bhakti*, the key which links the individual with the higher being, which gives a sense of unity, a unifying force to the entire creation of which we are all a part.

The development of these four qualities is the real sadhana, the real process of yoga.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The indweller of the heart

Extract

If there is a show in the form of beautiful ideas, lovely pearls make their appearance in the form of poetic effusions. If those pearls are pierced with skill and strung together on the beautiful thread of Sri Rama's exploits and if noble souls wear them in their innocent heart, grace in the form of excessive fondness is the result.

Since 1994, the gates of the Akhara have opened each successive year to all who would wend their way, like pilgrims of old, to be once more in the physical presence of Sri Swamiji and receive his darshan. How can a disciple describe what this opportunity means? Language cannot express the depth of feeling, whose true expression lies not in an effusion of words, but in the silent mystery of the heart.

Those of us, travelling east from Europe, leave countries in the depth of winter, where the skies are grey, the wind bitter, the air damp, and the light dim. We arrive at the Akhara to a profusion of colour, of flowers of all shades and hues and in a brilliant Indian light we join with others from all over the world, to spend the short time available, in the presence of a man who has changed the course of our lives, and who, each time we visit, gives us more guidance and wisdom.

For me, Sri Swamiji's guidance is not always in what he says, but in what lies just beneath what he says, like the flesh of

a fruit when you peel off the skin. What lies under the surface tastes differently to each according to need. Darshan with Sri Swamiji is, for me, like a Byzantine mosaic. Each moment has its place in a whole that glows with brilliance, mystery and beauty. The following are just fragments, not always of his actual words, but of my impressions, captured for a moment in time and savoured later again and again. Now they rise once more to the surface, as I ponder last year's Sita Kalyanam, and allow these memories to dance again in my heart.

He sits, clasping his hands so gently as though he were touching the light itself. His expression is of a child, full of wonder and innocence. His head tilted to the curve of his shoulder, and his smile radiating delight to us all. Purity sits before us; purity and sweetness; and for a brief moment we have a glimpse of who he really is.

It doesn't matter that you're not top dog. Fame, name or what you achieve in life belong to the world, and are not important in spiritual life. Success in spiritual life is gained through the daily occurrences of life; in living each moment to uplift another and in forgetting yourself. You should not be concerned with your own desires and achievements, but in attending to the needs of others; only then will you find happiness. Success of the world is equated with the ego and is illusory. Only the spirit is real. You can achieve all the fame in the world and still be unhappy. Contentment comes only when you live for others. This doesn't mean you don't strive to be happy. Of course, you do for life is meant to be enjoyed, but real enjoyment of life only comes when you give to another. This happiness cannot be understood through the intellect, but only through daily practice and experience. We've heard him say this again and again, but do we really understand? Every now and then in our lives a certain incident occurs, and for a moment time pauses, and we sigh, "Ah! Yes, that's it. That's what he meant," and then life moves on and we forget.

God only wants one thing: that we love him. God is always with us guiding, helping and inspiring us but we don't

hear him because of our continual judging and criticizing of one another. All he wants is for us to love him, but we love his creation more. See the divine in your guru. Love the one who personifies the divine for you. Step off the treadmill that turns on and on in ever widening circles of personal desires and attachments. Turn your whole heart and mind to God. "God is out and out sweet," he says. "The heart has no brain. Love can make mountains move. It is a powerful thing. Therefore, rely on your bhakti, on your emotions and not on your brain." What is your relationship with God? You need to discover your relationship with God. Find a way to be receptive to God's voice through the words of the guru. Make an effort and find the way.

To watch Sri Swamiji is to learn all that we need to learn. Hospitality is the example before us; he is always on the alert to see that everyone's needs are taken care of. Not for one moment does he lose himself. His eyes are not just on those in front on the stage, but on the sannyasins looking after the visitors as they enter. Have they been shown to the correct seat; are they comfortable? If he thinks this task has been neglected, he quickly corrects it, and then moves on in his discourse. Such a quick reproof few notice it has been made. His concentration is so one-pointed. Nothing misses his attention. The guest must always feel welcome and be treated with courtesy and care; the guest is a representative of divinity.

He so often gives us gifts. Of course, it is not the gift that is important here, but the blessing it represents that is being transferred. Life has subtle changes after one receives a gift. All the real teachings come to life as he plays before us. He plays, not to use people, but to move with the energies of life as they shift and change in their tone and in their timbre. He plays with these energies, simply, so others can be transformed.

Again he pauses and shifts gear, and is a child once more. One sees his vulnerability, like an exquisite piece of porcelain one can hold to the light and see through. But the courage,

the risk of being so open. Porcelain can so easily slip from our hands. How often it is smashed to pieces. How to remain open; how to remain vulnerable; how to live the price? . . .

Two events occurred, which, for me, were particular fragments which completed the mosaic. One was the cosmic mass which was co-celebrated by Sri Swamiji and the Rev. Antoinette Schoenmaker from the Independent Church of Australia. Sri Swamiji was dressed in long black robes and looked much like a Greek Orthodox priest. The celebration was a joyful one with much laughter and humour, and filled with much interactive participation from the congregation. It was particularly poignant for me, because Antoinette is the daughter of the Rev. Mario Schoenmaker, who passed away at the beginning of the year, and who was originally chosen as the celebrant. It was inspiring to see a woman in this role of priest alongside Sri Swamiji, who has always advocated the coming leadership of women. Sri Swamiji and Antoinette were like children playing the game of life, not wanting to outstrip the other, moving in and out of the ceremony with graceful ease and refinement.

The other event was the marriage ceremony between an Indian man and an Irish woman, which symbolized the marriage of Sita and Rama, as well as being an actual marriage ceremony. At this particular marriage, six hundred Indian girls from the nearby villages, who were married recently, were given their 'good luck kits', by Sri Swamiji himself.

"When you leave everything to God," Sri Swamiji says, "you will have joy and satisfaction. The sum and substance is that through the grace of God you were born; through the grace of God you live; through the grace of God you started on the spiritual life; and though the grace of God things happened in your life, good and bad both, as by the grace of God, not only good things happen."

Sri Swamiji talks about God like he is speaking of an intimate friend, "The relationship of God to his devotee is not one-sided; God also responds to the relationship. God is truth, auspiciousness and beauty," he says, "O God, accept

my relationship with you. I do not want a God who frees me from the cycle of birth and death; I want a God who can change my nature, so that I may serve others.”

To leave the Akhara is as profound as being there. I leave always with the certitude that I have experienced something of the divine plan in action, that at this remote place in the world the spiritual truths are actually lived, and that what I originally believed and had faith in as a child, and all my life have yearned for, actually exists here as a reality. Life is lived here as it should be and at a vibration that I have not found anywhere else in the world. Here is my source, my centre. Through this time of reconnection, the spirit is strengthened. I leave and move towards the periphery, but strengthened by memories that drift in and out of my consciousness as I resume my daily life.

—*Swami Sivamurti Saraswati, Greece*

The cosmic mass

Extracts

The highlight of the trip was the first time we walked into the spiritual gathering at the Akhara of Paramahansa Satyananda. He is an exceptional man: beautiful, wise, cutting, compassionate, truthful, a mystic.

. . . Paramahamsaji extended a warm welcome to us. Paramahamsaji shook our hands and introduced himself and his successor, Swami Niranjan, and gave us seats in chairs by his side. These were to be our places for the remainder of the week.

This welcome was very moving. He did not know me, or anything about our Centre or our Mass, yet his trust in us was complete. He honoured us in many ways – speaking with us often, sitting us next to him – when long time devotees may never even have had the chance to look into his eyes. It was an incredible experience and as I walked through the crowds on that first morning I felt tears of joy welling up within me.

When he asked me to address the people, the only thing that came to me was not words, but a song. I sang, “Oh love that knoweth of no fear, Oh love that sheds a joyous tear,” because that was how I felt. This obviously touched many people and forged a link between us immediately. Paramahamsaji later said to me, “Tears come when the soul cannot contain itself.”

. . . I had asked the Paramahamsa if he would like to assist me with communion. He took it one step further and said he would be delighted to co-celebrate the Mass with me! He had a special outfit made and looked a lot like a Greek orthodox priest. We didn’t have time for a run through, so we winged it – quite well really. I began with the usual invocation and then asked him to say the Universal Prayer written by his master, Swami Sivananda, which was a great moment, as it was obviously so familiar and dear to him and the people present . . .

I conducted the Mass simply, giving explanations in metaphysical terms (the inner sacrifice), I consecrated the bread and Paramahamsaji consecrated the wine – displaying Mario’s chalice to the crowd with great pride. When I invited people forward for communion, there was almost a stampede. They didn’t wait for any instructions, just leapt forward. I think for many it was the first opportunity they had to be close to the Paramahamsa and that was their chief motivation. For others though, it was a homecoming. They hadn’t received communion in a long time and it was a great privilege to give communion to these people. Several hundred received communion before Swami Niranjana put a stop to the flow of people as our time was up. I felt something had begun and was by no means over.

—*Rev. Antoniette Schoenmaker, Australia,
Independent Church of Australia*

Paramahamsaji's play

Extract

We heard Paramahamsaji's protestations that he did not want to see or hear or think about any of us, that he didn't understand why people should want to come for his darshan, whilst simultaneously seeing him sitting on a full tiger skin, glowing and resplendent with a portrayal of the sun behind him, on a high open-sided stand, greeting hundreds of people from every corner of India and all over the world. Many hundreds of us being blessed with the sweetest prasad from him, not once but three times a day, and watching him bestow an almost endless stream of gifts.

Hours of sitting almost motionless seemed to pass like fleeting minutes, effortlessly. The brutal 'shower' that bucketed down, (auspiciously of course, as the women began their chanting and pre-nuptial celebrations with Sita) completely flooding the proceedings with several inches of water in a matter of seconds. As all the participants ran frantically to get under shelter, Swami Niranjan remained outside, with no thought for himself, running, sliding, even slipping in the mud, his concern at that moment being to get peoples' bags, cushions and shoes under dry cover. No mud appeared to stick to his drenched dhoti. Swamiji played his supporting role as master of ceremonies to perfection. Watching over the whole proceedings whilst remaining completely in tune with his guru at all times. To observe just a fraction of his obedience, devotion and humility in serving his guru was inspirational.

There was as a strong emphasis again on the role and importance of women: "I want to give ladies bicycles, so that they can be independent." (The bicycle shop in Deoghar was working overtime with all the orders that came in). The priestess and her helpers brought from Australia to perform mass in front of some twenty-five nationalities. Paramahamsaji, dressed like a Greek orthodox priest, joined her in the ceremony, giving a radical and true meaning to the word communion

There was so much, so many details and observations, but none can relay the feeling of the heart, out of time and space as we usually know it, immersed in the flood of grace, dynamism and omnipotence that abound at the Paramahansa Alakh Barah.

—*Sannyasi Atmatattwa, UK*

A whimsical view of Sita Kalyanam

Extract

Through the Sita Kalyanam program Paramahamsaji managed to achieve what many overseas aid organizations talk about enthusiastically but rarely achieve: to reinforce people's belief in themselves and the value of their culture. This is perhaps the most subtle and profound gift compassion can bestow for it provides hope, self-respect and it feeds the soul.

Paramahamsaji's approach to 'helping' his neighbours is truly comprehensive; he provides the basic, physical essentials; the means to earn a living; education; medicine; housing and spiritual nourishment through the cultural activities he hosts at Rikhia and programs such as Sita Kalyanam. He is not concerned to associate himself with an image of compassion linked to esoteric spiritual idealism, he responds to what is actually required, in this case a wedding. Thus he continues to shower sannyasins with the same compassion he gives his neighbours by showing us how to tread the path of real spirituality.

—*Swami Matrikananda Saraswati, UK*

Bridging the gap

I came to India from Australia, one of the world's affluent countries and a land which has suffered extensive environmental damage in just 200 years of European settlement. Over the years of involvement in yoga I have sometimes

pondered what impact it is having on such pressing global problems as the widening gulf between the haves and have-nots and the destruction we are causing to our planet.

When I came to Rikhia for Sita Kalyanam my questions were answered. Paramahamsaji talked at length in the satsangs about the work he is doing to fulfil the command he received to “help his neighbours.” Any charitable work is admirable but his vision goes way beyond mere good work. In one satsang he compared our fragile Western societies, where the least inconvenience throws everyone into panic, with the robustness of this simple traditional society. And as we commuted each day between Deoghar and Rikhia and passed through villages en route, we were able to witness a way of life which is simple and basic. It has a definite social structure and its methods of working with the earth have stood the test of time. Ecologically sustainable we would say in the West.

In hosting Sita Kalyanam, Paramahamsaji has made himself into a kind of father figure for all the brides of the area and a major event of the final day of the celebration was the presentation of hundreds of bridal kits (what he calls ‘good luck kits’) to these girls. He invited us to contribute the sarees, jewellery and cosmetics, which are the essential items but said that only the best would do – as if it were our own daughter or sister. In another satsang he urged us (representing the ‘haves’ of this world) to extend our family, in other words to extend our giving beyond the small circle of our nearest and dearest, and in so doing to come closer to God. Charity has been said to have a cold face – what Paramahamsaji is giving us is an opportunity to open our hearts, and not just our purses. I felt that here was a missing link for those of us who have focused so long on yoga as the solution to man’s ills.

I had heard about Sivananda Math but I had to come to Rikhia and see the work for myself in order to be inspired by it. So I got involved in some of the sorting of contributions at the Akhara and then one morning went out on one of the

distribution trips. It would have been worthwhile just to see the expectant faces of the village children!

Apart from the obvious pleasure one receives in giving, I felt that we were also having the experience of receiving – the privilege of having a little glimpse into the life of these people (and some of the village men went back to threshing their rice even before we'd left). I'm sure this is part of Paramahamsaji's plan, for some of this simplicity and connectedness with the earth to rub off on those of us who come from a life of convenience and complication.

We got back to the Akhara in time for the tail end of the satsang and there was Paramahamsaji talking on this very subject. He praised the strength of the traditional Indian matriarchal society, one based on the knowledge that we are all sons and daughters of the earth. Patriarchal societies have forgotten this. He said that he does not give out bridal kits in order to make poor people rich but in order to help sustain and nurture their society. In fact, he said that it is only through them that we (affluent Westerners) can learn to survive.

By giving us the opportunity to help some of these simple-living people to stand on their own feet, Paramahamsaji is helping to bridge the gulf between the East and the West, poor and rich, for what we are learning is probably more significant than what they are receiving. I like to think that the effect of Paramahamsaji's present work will radiate out into the world in ever widening circles, just as his yoga work has done.

—*Swami Siddhamurti Saraswati, Australia*

Seva

Extract

The highlight of Sita Kalyanam was the ecstasy and joy surrounding Paramahamsaji as he carefully loaded some eight hundred saubhagya manjusha, good luck kits, onto

the young brides' heads. Even at the end of this task, although he would have been tired, the joyous vibration was undiminished.

In the beginning Paramahamsaji talked about service, *seva*, giving purification, meditation and realization. I was lucky enough to be given the opportunity to do some *seva*. Of course, there was one part of me which wanted to participate very much in the program, but for the first few days I seemed to be secretary to Swamiji and he was always giving me jobs, running here, running there, calling this or that person. In between I would just listen to the program for ten or fifteen minutes or maybe I'd catch the whole speech. It was the same message again and again and made me think, "Well, maybe I should think about this very deeply and find out what level I am at. Am I at the *seva* level or at the giving level or at the *sadhana* level?" I found that the best thing for me was the *seva* level and I hope for the rest of my life I will have the opportunity to do service. I don't know personally how to serve God, but doing *seva* for guru is easy because he says, "Go and do this." Sometimes, of course, it is not so easy because the instructions are general and you have to work out yourself how to try and do it best, but at least there is something to follow.

The result was an opportunity for *seva* and I hope it continues because *seva* is a wonderful training. Every time I do *seva* I can find this selfish part of me blooming up, which otherwise I wouldn't have had a clue about. The whole of the year I do the things that are in front of me and for just these few days I have an opportunity to do somebody else's work.

—*Swami Nityabodhananda Saraswati, Australia*

No ordinary event

Extract

Paramahamsaji promised that this would not be an ordinary event, and it was not. He gave away many beautiful sarees to the women of Rikhia for the wedding of Sita and Rama. He also gave away over six hundred ‘good luck kits’ to young women who had been promised in marriage. Face after face of each young bride was filled with a sense of thanks and joy. These are not wealthy women but some of the poorest in the area. He spoke of the need to and value of maintaining the cultural and traditional spiritual values of the Indian people. This is the true wealth of a society and one which makes it a strong society and not a weak one. Who else would give away 250 to 300 million rupees worth of marriage gifts and essentials without caring for reward or favour in return?

There were so many people to feed, every day thousands to take care of, with the leftovers taken to surrounding villages as prasad at night. The swamis who delivered it often did not return till after midnight as they were often asked to stay for chai and kirtan by the people. Not much sleep for an Akhara swami!

Also given away were many rickshaws, thelas, sewing machines, sewing kits, woodworking and other tools for roadworks and farming, bicycles, cooking pots, clothes, toys, medicines and much more. What moved my heart the most was the sight of seven specially designed tricycles for people with no legs or lack of use of legs. Some were carried from their sliding mats and hand-pads or from crutches to ride away in their own hand-cranked brand-new tricycle. Paramahamsaji promised to order a thousand more so that no disabled man, woman or child in his area would be without transport which is so vital in being able to gain useful employment. This was true seva, true bhakti, and this was no ordinary event!

—*Swami Sannyasananda Saraswati, Australia*

A unique experience

Lord Shiva has openly declared that his relationship with Sri Rama is that of bhakta and Bhagawan. Even Paramahamsaji had made it clear that the event of Sita Kalyanam was being celebrated with utmost sincerity, innocence and in the childlike hope and belief that Lord Shiva, the supreme bhakta of Sri Rama, would definitely come in some form or other to behold His Ishta being united in wedlock. Therefore, Paramahamsaji had very appropriately chosen the theme bhajan *Jaya Jaya Shiva Bhole Bhandari, He Ashutosha, He Tripurari* and concluding arati *Jaya Shiva Omkara, Prabhu Shiva Omkara* dedicated and devoted to Lord Shiva during this auspicious event. All the devotional bhajans from beginning to end pertained only to Lord Shiva. We are more than certain that Lord Shiva must have descended from his heavenly abode to grace Paramahamsaji's heavenly abode on this earth. Though we could not see the Lord with our naked eyes, we could certainly feel His presence in that serene and divine atmosphere.

Sita Kalyanam had many firsts to her credit. It was the first time that Paramahamsaji had appeared in different attire for different occasions, sometimes dressed like a priest, sometimes a sage and sometimes a royal king. One could easily see in him Christ, Sage Vasishtha, King Janaka or Dasharatha. It goes without saying that whatever robe Paramahamsaji wore adorned him the most.

It was the first time that a Mass was held outdoors, on the same platform where devotional bhajans and kirtans were being sung with a painting of Lord Shiva and Parvati in the background. The Cosmic Mass, conducted by three female priests from Australia, assisted by Paramahamsaji as co-celebrant, before a mammoth gathering, was a unique event. Last year during Ram Naam Aradhana it was the Sikhs, with their Holy Guru Granth Sahib, sharing the same platform. This year it was a Christian Mass. Next year will it be a Mohammedan group with their Holy Koran? After all, Ishwara, Allah, Christ, Buddha are just different names

of that Almighty, the supreme authority and power which is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent!

It was the first time that, while enacting the wedding of Sri Rama and Sita, a real marriage was taking place side by side on the dais with full vedic rites conducted by four learned pandits from Varanasi. What an experience for Nirlipta (proxy for Rama) and Uma (proxy for Sita), citizens of United Kingdom, to exchange the sacred vows of marriage in front of an unprecedented number of people from twenty-three countries at a small and remote place like Rikhiadham! Paramahamsaji was dressed as a royal king, Swami Niranjan as a royal prince, Swami Satsangi as a queen, besides thousands of devotees dressed up in their best available attire, as per the wish of Paramahamsaji. Most of the foreign ladies were wrapped up in traditional Indian sarees.

—*Swami Srimukhananda Saraswati, Jaipur*

Beyond the yoga of Patanjali

Extract

My intention is not to compare the ashtanga yoga of Sage Patanjali with that of Swami Sivananda. I am simply trying to explain that in Sage Patanjali's yoga the effort is to understand the individual being, the individual personality, the individual nature. In the ashtanga yoga of Sivananda the effort is to make oneself a part of humanity by expressing one's best qualities. That leads to realization, to the dissolution of the dualistic mentality, 'me' and 'you'.

In the life of Paramahamsaji we can see a natural progression from the yoga of Patanjali to the yoga of Sivananda. A combination of the two makes life richer, more beautiful, more inspiring and more encouraging.

—*Swami Niranjananda Saraswati*

Festival of swings

August 4th to 8th was a memorable period for the people of Rikhia panchayat, Deoghar, and other adjoining villages. A *Jhoolan Utsav*, festival of swings, was organized by the Sri Panchdashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara, Rikhia, under the inspiration of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Every evening between 5 and 8 pm, a program of bhajan and kirtans was held before bedecked idols of Radha and Krishna, who were seated on a swing. On another swing was an idol of baby Krishna or *Laddu Gopal* as he is lovingly called. Sri Swamiji gave darshan daily for all. Prasad of sweets was distributed to those who attended the event and Swami Niranjan complimented the local kirtan groups by presenting them with gifts.

The most spectacular feature of the event was the decor of the idols. On each of the five days they displayed a different theme, colour scheme and decorations, creating a new experience every day. To have an idea of the magic of the ambience, visualize a beautiful stage on which there are two swings. On one sits a beautifully attired Radha-Krishna, and on the other, Laddu Gopal. Sri Swamiji is sitting at their feet, a short distance away. In his hands are two strings which emerge from the swings. He pulls them gently so that the swing moves to and fro. In the light the jewels of the idols sparkle with a hypnotic effect. The kirtans go on, full of spontaneous, rural simplicity and passion.

Sri Swamiji then passes the strings on to those who are closest to his heart, the villagers of Rikhia, lined up in their thousands for a turn to swing the Lord. Arati is sung by two village girls, much to the delight of Sri Swamiji, who introduces them as belonging to 'my' village. After arati Sri Swamiji leaves and the kirtans continue.

The villagers looked mesmerized at seeing this royal enactment of a past event which, although being an inseparable part of Indian mythology, tradition and religion, is seldom undertaken with such feeling, fervour and organization. The reaction of the villagers was an affirmation

that in their simplicity lies their spiritual strength. Short of lofty words, concepts or even basic means, the *bhava* of every man, woman, child and even infant before the idols said it all. A range of emotion would flit across their whole being in the few seconds in which they communed with the Lord – from awe to humility to surrender.

One could understand why the crucial ingredient for spiritual evolution, i.e. surrender, was almost a natural expression in their lives; they seemed to have no one else to turn to. Most were in clothes given to them by Sri Swamiji. Others were in tatters, but the light of love for Sri Krishna shone on every face. This event seemed to add strength to their inner satisfaction of feeling the Lord in their hearts, for nothing new was being said or taught. It was simply a celebration of divine love which is the legacy of every heart and which is symbolically celebrated in lore as the love that Radha and Krishna shared.

This event was a reminder that in a past aeon there existed a human being with divine *pratibha*, talents, who was the Lord incarnate and who braved all odds to spread the message of divine love amongst a troubled humanity. His spirit remains enshrined in every heart, and when the dark monsoon clouds of Shravan dance in the sky, the image of Krishna in Vrindavan, swinging from the branches of a Kadamba tree with Radha, in a celebration of the most sublime love, comes to life in Indian culture. Even today girls and boys put the *jhoola*, swing, on trees in this season, swinging and singing intensely passionate songs of love to feel that divine presence in their lives.

Sri Swamiji's treat of the Jhoolan Utsav for his villagers was a rekindling of the flame of Divine love among a people who are never far from it.

—Sannyasi Karmadhara

A living example of yoga

Extract

If you want to experience health, if you want to experience peace and to evolve, make yoga a part of your lifestyle. This is what Paramahansa Satyananda is still teaching, not in a classroom environment, not as a yoga teacher but as a living example of the yogic lifestyle. After departing from the yogic mission which he had created, Paramahamsaji travelled and settled eventually in the village of Rikhia, in Deoghar. There he entered into the performance of intense sadhana, not for himself, but more for us to realize that there is another dimension to yoga, another dimension to the personal involvement with spiritual life. He has been in Rikhia since 1989, performing different vedic and tantric sadhanas.

Paramahamsaji has said clearly, “When I took sannyasa it was not to become a guru, to have an institution and disciples. My purpose was to realize my nature, but my guru had told me, ‘You need to exhaust your karmas, you need to stop recycling the samskaras, you need to burn the seeds so that they die and don’t have the potential to come up in the form of a tree!’ In order to do that I did my work. People called me a guru, I established institutions, but that was not my aim in life. I’m a sannyasin and I am thankful to God that I have not forgotten that. It is my purpose in life to discover my nature.”

It is with this inspiration of sannyasa still alive in his heart, that Paramahamsaji is performing, guiding and inspiring thousands, even today, to experience the true yogic life. We are yoga teachers, we teach yoga, we hold conventions and conferences, we may call ourselves yogis but actually we are not. How can we say that we live yoga? Paramahamsaji is a true yogi, one who lives yoga. For me, and for many who have known him, he is a living example of yoga.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

1999

Universal love

Paramahamsaji gives prasad to 10,000 families, 50 in one village, 250 in another, 1,000 in another, and so on. He looks after the needs of each and everyone and the area of care is also increasing. He gives tricycles to the physically handicapped so that they can move about and go to work without being dragged or carried and dumped.

Paramahamsaji also looks after the school girls by giving them bicycles. The girls are only given the bicycles after they have made a sankalpa that, “I will only use the bicycle for my journey to and from school and I will not lend it to my father or brother or any other relative.” This gives them the facility to travel from remote villages to their school or college in Deoghar, otherwise they would have to walk ten kilometres across barren land and jungle.

Paramahamsaji gives sewing machines to women in different families so they can make and mend clothes, do jobs here and have a means of livelihood. He has houses constructed and gives them to those who have no shelter. There is free medical treatment available at the clinic at the Alakh Bara to anyone who wishes to come. On average 150 to 200 people are given free treatment daily.

Then there is the TB project. Fifty to sixty people per batch are treated for tuberculosis, with proper medicine, attention and care. Medical equipment and supplies come

during and after Sita Kalyanam. A three story, twenty-four bed clinic is now ready, which will have an operating theatre, emergency and medical facilities. The entire service will be provided free of cost to the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich. There will be no distinction, a millionaire and a beggar will receive the same treatment. It is a big project.

Paramahamsaji has started a novel scheme. He gathers the widows of the area who are confined to their rooms in the villages. Superstition says that the husband died because the wife brought bad luck, and therefore, she has to remain a widow for the rest of her life. Paramahamsaji also gathers all the old women who just sit at home with nothing to do, bossing their daughters-in-law, fighting with their sons, dictating terms, and who are actually a burden on their families. Paramahamsaji calls these women and they chant, write, read and sing mantras and kirtans for eight hours every day.

At the end of the day he pays them the daily rate of labour. If the women sing, chant, write or read God's name for four hours, they are paid half the daily amount; if they work the whole day they are given the full daily rate. Taking God's name is also labour. A bhakta is also a labourer just like a plumber or an electrician.

There are other projects such as agricultural and educational assistance. Young children are taught English. There are many people who go to Rikhia for two weeks, three weeks, one month, three months and teach the local children. Paramahamsaji gives dictionaries, notebooks, pens and even games such as footballs and cricket sets to students and colleges in the area.

Universal vision

What do all these projects indicate? Why these kinds and types of work? You can't call it social service. It is nothing short of a cultural revolution to revive the human nature that is lying dormant in each one of us. This expression of

love and compassion has a much broader range than that of any normal person. It is a reflection of the universal cosmic vision. That is love.

Love is not hugging and going gaga over someone. People in the world have distorted the concept of love. The usual concept of love revolves around the body and emotions yet actual love is not physical or emotional, rather spiritual. The gopis felt it for Krishna; they all had husbands and families but they pined for Krishna. They suffered the agony of being separated from him. That is one kind of bhakti love. Seeing the oneness in everyone, seeing the presence of divinity in everyone, that is a kind of jnani love, working and striving to make everyone happy so that nobody should feel there is something missing in his or her life.

There are places where people have not entered the kitchen for three days or lit their fire because they have nothing to eat, not even a grain of rice. Can you imagine a society where a family has nothing to eat? Reaching out to such people is an expression of universal love, touching different people in a very practical and humble way by eradicating the feeling of absence from their lives, and giving them a sense of dignity, of being wanted, cared for, looked after and guided.

The impact of this inspirational work of Paramahamsaji will be felt in the future. Such kind of love is difficult to awaken, but the beginning of such love can give you a hint, an understanding. If you can begin to understand the needs of another, if you can begin to understand the suffering, the happiness, the pain, the isolation and the joy, you can also express that love. Let us start gradually, let it take years to manifest fully. Even if it takes a lifetime, it does not matter. It is definitely worth it. Begin with understanding, that is the first step. Other doors will gradually open up as you begin your journey.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Unity in diversity

Extract

This year I came to Rikhia solely to have darshan of my Beloved – the various “entertainments” on offer did not tempt me in the least. So when it became apparent that Paramahamsaji was not going to give his usual wonderful and lengthy satsangs, I was, briefly, disappointed. However, guru’s grace comes in many shapes and forms and I was quite happy practising trataka on the back of his head or on his profile during the endless lectures on *Ramayana*.

There were, however, a couple of events which touched me deeply – events which could only have been thought up and organized by Paramahamsaji and Swami Niranjan. These events were hugely significant and will have long-term repercussions in India and elsewhere.

Along with many people (especially women I daresay), I have been somewhat ‘Islamophobic for a number of years, in the sense that I do not like nor approve of the expression of Islam by its followers, so I was most interested in the presence of the Imam of the Munger mosque, Abdullah Bukhari, and only regretted my poor understanding of Hindi as he expressed the pure and sublime teaching of Islam, together with chanting from the holy Koran. And it was an extraordinary experience to practise namaz under his guidance, with half an eye on our two Swamijis, dressed in white and looking for all the world like two perfect Muslims, as they too followed his movements.

I was privileged to meet the Maulana after his talk and I asked him for a message for my Muslim yoga students in London, and the message is that namaz and yoga are one.

However, my Islamophobia was nothing compared with my deep dislike of almost everything Christian, thanks to being educated for a short time in an Anglican convent school before being expelled. The abuse I suffered there made me a devout atheist for many a long year; so I was prepared to have a few buttons pushed at the Mass being

celebrated at Rikhia, although the fact that the priest was a woman was of some consolation and encouragement. So, imagine my horror when I was told that I was to be one of the swamis actually participating in the Mass, and not only participating, but also giving the consecrated bread to the people! Hmmm, I thought, both Paramahamsaji and the Reverend Antoinette Schoenmaker are taking the joke too far this time! But once again my doubts were gently smoothed during the rehearsal by Antoinette's warmth and understanding, and when the day dawned I was actually looking forward to the celebration.

And what a celebration it was! Being given the bread by my beloved guru was a wonderfully healing experience and once again I was almost overwhelmed by the power and love flowing through him. Words can never adequately describe this experience of shaktipat, and as I write this my heart is full of love and gratitude and my eyes are full of tears and I shall never forget it. What seemed like a lifetime later I moved along the rows of people with my little leaf dish of wafers, which they received in their hands or mouth, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to make the sign of the cross on each one and to wish that the presence of Christ be with them. And as the Lords of the Dance brought the Mass to a grand finale the swami priests danced and laughed and bathed in the light of their guru's eyes and marvelled at the wonder of it all.

—*Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati, England*

Rikhia's rajarishi

Awe and amazement were the feelings that filled each of the nine days that I spent in Rikhia as the guest of Paramahansa Satyananda. Many gifted teachers and political leaders have the ability to inspire. Paramahamsaji, however, not only inspires but has the ability to link up with his devotees on an internal as well as an external plane. The fact that he can instantaneously recall the name of anyone to whom

he has given sannyasa (no matter how long ago) is in itself miraculous.

How Paramahamsaji establishes the internal link, and how he uses that link to sculpt and mould an individual is part of the mystery whose solution never ceases to baffle me.

During the festivities at the same time as the internal connections were taking place, Paramahamsaji graciously performed his social duties as host of Sita Kalyanam. At all times he was the perfect gentleman, warmly and courteously welcoming his guests and making them feel that his or her presence was especially pleasing and important to him. The specialness of each guest was visibly reinforced by their being daily garlanded with malas of fresh marigolds.

Unlike any ordinary host or hostess, Paramahamsaji never fretted or fussed over the details of the various events. He remained calm, unruffled and joyous throughout the nine days of the program. What was extraordinary was the way that, without looking over his shoulder or turning his head, Paramahamsaji would see whenever official guests would arrive.

Although it is relatively easy for us to emulate Paramahamsaji's flawless good manners and reverence for others, to enter into and understand the workings of the mystery and magic of Sita Kalyanam can only be achieved through guru's grace. To make ourselves worthy and to express our gratitude to Paramahamsaji we need to follow his exhortations to love and serve the less fortunate.

—*Swami Agnihotri Saraswati, Vietnam*

Guru's grace

Extract

I have many memories of the celebration of Sita Kalyanam at Rikhia in the presence of Sri Swamiji. What struck everyone who had known Swamiji before the late eighties was how familiar he appeared, having shaved clean both his head and

beard. So the childlike beauty and radiance was completely uncovered for all to see. And how he shared that special unfathomable, unexplainable quality so freely with everyone. Certainly he spoke to us less than we had been accustomed to on previous occasions, but his presence seemed to be more personally felt through all the expressions of worship of God that we witnessed and participated in.

This leads to an impression I was left with. That the roads to God are many and all are to be respected no matter what path we have chosen personally. By inviting and participating in the ceremonies of different forms of worship – Shaivaite, Muslim, Christian, Tantric and the wedding ceremony of Sita and Rama – Swamiji appeared to be showing how all forms of worship are equal, endorsing each of them by his presence. By participating and immersing himself in them so fully he seemed to infuse every moment of worship with his own special energy. This became both an example and an inspiration to us all to experience and understand acts of worship that we may have been ignorant of or mistrusted in the past.

These gatherings with Sri Swamiji are very powerful sadhanas that bring me into contact with the reality within ourselves and, in turn, nearer to the cosmic reality. We can understand really only a very small part of the way guru's grace works but we can respond to Swamiji's repeated message to realize God in every aspect of our lives through any means that we respond to within our own nature and find ways to serve the divinity of humanity in the form of anyone who suffers in body, mind or spirit. In this way we bring ourselves constantly nearer to guru's grace, and it is through grace alone that we may realize our true Self in all its completeness. Jaya Guru Jaya Guru Jaya Guru Satyananda.

—*Swami Anandakumar Saraswati, Australia*

An exuberant experience

Extract

Upon arrival we immediately entered into and experienced the extraordinary energy field that surrounds Paramahamsaji. Again, time and space lost all their usual known contexts. Being on the go for between 18 and 21 hours per day for several days in a row felt completely appropriate and after three or four hours rest, one awoke feeling instantly fresh, bright and ready for action again. There was no irritability or tiredness, not even a yawn, just a continuous surge of wellbeing, energy and joy. The body felt light, clear and dynamic. The mind was able to remain focused almost effortlessly on whatever task was at hand. It felt like being attached to a spiritual generator that regulated everything within everybody to ensure that all the necessary jobs were done in a smooth, oiled, harmonious manner. What a gift to all those present.

The delightful, radical yet reverent play that Paramahamsaji promotes between sacred religions of the world, the merging of cultures and nations. This time it was the Jains, Muslims, Shaivaites, Tantrics, Hindus and Christians. The message is crystal clear. At the end of the day no matter what outfits we choose to wear, we are simply who we are. No matter which path we choose to tread, ultimately all routes lead to the same universal place of union.

All boundaries seemed to merge as hearts opened spontaneously; consciousness shifted, whether up, down or sideways is hard to say, but a tangible change was felt. We took our leave immersed in inspiration and filled with immense gratitude, wonder and love.

—*Sannyasi Atmatattva, England*

Thank you, Paramahamsaji

Extract

I cannot possibly thank you adequately for your invitation to attend the Sita Kalyanam festival at Rikhia and in your presence. I had no idea what to expect, but the reality was beyond anything I could have imagined. The effect will remain with me always, as an ever-present inspiration to follow where you lead us – to total love of the Divine and his creation, in particular our own poorer neighbours. Your ‘humble neighbours’ are indeed blessed, in having your light and generosity to enrich their lives.

The celebration made manifest so much for me personally, through your living example, for all of which I thank you profoundly.

My overall impression and lasting memory of this wonderful festival will be of joy, your joy bubbling up like fountains of light around you. You demonstrate so clearly what it means to realize and walk with your God, and thereby to be fully yourself. This joy was expressed in so many ways: your hospitality, your giving, your concern for our comfort, your love for your ‘humble neighbours’ and your spontaneity. It was reflected in the beautiful marigold colours of the pavilion, the geru robes, the garlands. It sounded out in the chanting, the music, the discourses.

—*Sannyasi Dayamurti, England*

Initiation

Extract

What did I learn from Paramahamsaji? I learnt more about him by seeing the look of devotion, contentment, peace and awe in the faces of his disciples when they were near to him, one of the most pure expressions of love that I’ve ever seen. I can’t say I fully understand or relate to this notion of complete surrender and devotion (as much as I’d love to be

able to), but on several occasions it touched me very deeply.

I also learnt that Paramahamsaji is a first-class leader in the art of giving, working, inspiring and putting his pure, idealistic words into real, hard action. Even I, (at that time) an uninitiated visitor, was given so much during my time there. So much so, that I felt very uncomfortable to receive. I felt unworthy. Surely there were far more needy people than me around? But by the end of my time not only did I come to understand the exceptional quality of prasada that Paramahamsaji gives to local families and newly-weds, I also learnt how to receive with a wide open and thankful heart. Although I've always had a firm understanding of the pleasure involved in giving, I've never been too comfortable being on the receiving end.

Whatever it is that's contained in that tiny body of his, whatever it is that can take my energy levels on a rollercoaster high and bring them slap back down to earth again, I like to think it's made of the same stuff that can inspire such strength and devotion in his disciples. I am keen to return.

—*Muktidharana (Zoe Lynch), Hong Kong*

Why was I there?

When we arrived in Rikhia I saw Paramahamsaji smiling, alert, kind, full of energy. He was talking to many of the guests, participating in each activity, telling us about every event taking place in front of our eyes, teaching us like a true teacher.

The key word was giving. This happened in a subtle way, as all the activities were geared to uplift the spirit, to make us aware of humanity in general and to warm our hearts. All this became more evident to me when Paramahamsaji asked, "Are you happy?" This was it, making us happy was the focus of this event, which was why he was so alert.

Now I knew what this loving old man wanted – but was that all? No, he also wanted us to feel God, and for that the program included a three-hour fire ceremony with tantric yoginis. Paramahamsaji said very clearly, "Do not try

to think, for love, hatred, passion can only be felt. Listen to the mantra and feel. Tantra is a way to go into *atma*, your own spirit, where there is moksha, samadhi, absolute contentment, satisfaction.” Again another invitation to be happy. This was a powerful experience and I can still feel the mantras resonating inside.

These were some of the presents to keep in our hearts. Every day I saw Paramahamsaji, seated on the ground, handing out hundreds of presents, one by one. We received T-shirts, saris and books directly from him. Why does he have to give so much, I asked myself? Why can’t I see it? Well, it struck me when at one point Paramahamsaji said, “Peace follows renunciation.” The giving and the humbleness Paramahamsaji shows is truly that of a man who is great. This humbleness was such that it touched a chord in my heart, like music that is too great to comprehend.

However, there was still another puzzle. Why am I here? Why am I so lucky to experience this gathering of bliss? Again Paramahamsaji gave me an answer – *kripa*. He said that we were all here due to the grace of God. I recall his smile, and I could feel a pure energy coming from his eyes.

Thank you for all this, thank you for sharing with your villagers and for bringing us here to see you. It would be easy for you to go to France, England or any other rich country, in first class. But instead you chose to have us come to Rikhia and open our eyes. You have touched us all in a most profound manner.

—*Sannyasi Shantipriya, Uruguay*

Giving and service

Since returning from Rikhia, I’ve been thinking a lot about that extraordinary experience and I’ve been trying to observe my feelings. The main concern for Paramahamsaji is serving: serving his neighbours and serving the people he invited to the event. Service as the only possible relationship one can establish with God. This was the most important

message I imbibed – service as a way to worship God, in any form we may see or experience Him/Her, be it through mantra, havan, pooja, prayers or any rite belonging to any religious belief, or simply serving the poorest of the poor.

He made us experience different methods of worshipping God, overcoming external unnecessary differences, to make us realize that the important thing is establishing a relationship, finding a contact. I felt it was a time for us to experience, not to think. There were no satsangs and I enjoyed the caring, silent presence of Paramahamsaji. He has inspired and guided many people for many years and now he's helping us to find our own way to relate to the Almighty and for this, words are hindrances.

I feel that a spark of his grace has touched me – piercing the thick layers of security exclusively based on rational understanding – and opened the door to an unknown world, a world of pure love that I've always denied myself. This is the greatest gift he could have given me.

—Jignasu Premarpan, Italy

A time of inspiration

Extract

The overwhelming impression of Sita Kalyanam for me was a feeling of the ethereal and of giving, giving and giving.

Paramahansa Satyananda's presence generated a powerhouse of love to all and his enjoyment of the proceedings was so evident. He gave of himself, he gave gifts, he honoured distinguished guests and he wore different garments to fit the different occasions. His message was simple: there is but one God and to honour God. See God in all and honour all other sentient beings. Love and give. And Paramahansa Satyananda was a shining example.

—Sannyasi Swadhyaya, Australia

Cosmic Dance with My Divine Partner

Paramahamsaji sitting, eyes closed.
Fully involved and satisfied in sitting, living, breathing.
He sits like a lion in the centre of the world.
Is this the look of experiencing God, being God,
vibrating Aum and God?
I am captivated.
Tears well, but I am not sad. I stay floating in this
warm river of breath, Aum, cosmic breath.
Bathe me Paramahamsaji, be my mother.
Then resistance rises inside, reasons I'm not good
enough.
I separate.
Again, my gaze goes to him, I rush to wash in his ocean,
let my tendrils float in the warmth.
People come and go.
Paramahamsaji jokes in Hindi, a deep guttural laugh.
The sound is part of the ocean roar.
Does he want me? Am I included? I pull myself
separate.
Unchanged he sits, chatting and greeting many people.
Why would I be different? I let myself open again.
The current washes me, kirtan carries me.
Will I drown and lose myself? The pleasure of the fear
in that drowning. Again, I separate.
He closes his outer gates (eyes and mouth) and radiates
more strongly to my heart. In and out, as the Shiva
Shakti triangles point down to earth and open up to
heaven. I almost see the shimmer of energy – a flash, a
shadow, in the mind not in the eyes. He is the hot spot
of the trataka centre, not a man in a body at all.
I wash in the water of life.

—*Swami Avinashananda Saraswati, Australia*

One woman's way in a patriarchal system

Extract

When I first became involved in yoga in the 1960s, I was only just beginning to take a look at my own conditioning, as a woman in a man's world, and even now, aged fifty-seven, I am not sure if I have got to the bottom of it, so deep and insidious it is. I never even noticed that all the great teachers of the past and the present were men and that the teachings themselves were male-oriented. I do remember noticing, however, that there was naumukhi mudra, but not dasmukhi mudra for me!

In 1969, I had the great good fortune to meet my beloved guru Paramahansa Satyananda, and I saw that he had many female disciples, who were in positions of authority and not just relegated to doing 'women's work'. Through him I learned that my 'grandfather guru' Sri Swami Sivananda had taken the gigantic step of initiating women into the Dashnami order of sannyasa and that this had caused serious dissent amongst the orthodox people of his day; and indeed Paramahamsaji himself was much criticized for continuing this noble, if revolutionary, work of recognizing women as equals. In his satsangs Paramahamsaji often spoke of the fine qualities of women and of our great spiritual potential, and I am sure that many of us received great encouragement and inspiration from his spoken and written words.

—Swami Pragyamurti Saraswati, UK

Guru-disciple relationship

We are the raw material like a stone or a rock and guru is the sculptor. When guru begins to chisel the stone it hurts a lot, because he has to cut away the unnecessary parts in order to bring out an image. If the stone begins to cry and says, "No, no, don't touch me, don't hit me, don't cut me," then the sculptor is going to throw the stone away. But if the stone allows the sculptor to do all the necessary carving, eventually

that stone, which had no value, will become invaluable. It will adorn a temple, a home or a garden and will represent the creativity of the sculptor.

This is the attitude a disciple must have in relation to the guru. At least in my life I have always maintained this attitude. Although I feel very lucky to have lived with Paramahamsaji, to have been guided, loved, supported and nurtured by him, at the same time, every day I have to remind myself that I am ready for anything. He may use me, he may abuse me, it doesn't matter.

It has been my experience that a guru will never follow the path of injustice, the path that is not dharmic. Sometimes the actions may be harsh, but never unjust or adharmic. The instructions may be harsh, the training may be difficult, but if there is no injustice and if there is no adharma, then why not accept it? That has been my constant thought from a very early age until today.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Be a disciple

Extract

Only those people who are insecure in life, who desire respect, who crave control and power, project themselves as gurus. Guruship cannot be a position, a label or a status. The guru nature evolves spontaneously in those people who are true disciples, who don't care for what the world says and who try to develop simplicity, naturalness and service as much as possible in their lives.

Paramahamsaji has been very clear in his statements that he does not want people to think of him as a guru. When someone came to him in the Akhara and wanted to touch his feet, Paramahamsaji said, "Don't break the discipline here." The person replied, "But you are a guru." Paramahamsaji said, "I didn't tell you I'm your guru." He did not say, "I'm your guru." He said, "You imagine that I

am the guru.” This is one quality that has always shown itself in Paramahamsaji’s life.

People may have seen him as an enlightened being, and there is no question that he is. I call him ‘the god who hides himself’. People have seen him as a master and there is no doubt that he is a master. People have recognized him as a siddha and there is no doubt that he is also a siddha, but deep inside he identifies not with the labels that people put on him, but with the label he has given himself, which is that of a disciple.

In the life of any individual, especially in the life of devoted and dedicated sannyasins, it is the moment of dedication, the moment of surrender which has to be the inspiration to guide them through their lives. During the 1993 Tyag Convention, Paramahamsaji sent us the following message: “I send my good wishes for the convention. You call it Tyag Jayanti. I call it *Samarpan Muhurat*, the moment of dedication. It was that time, an auspicious moment in my life, which I experienced fifty years ago in the presence of my guru, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.”

To this day Paramahamsaji always remembers it as a great moment of dedication. The memory of surrendering in front of his guru is still as fresh as ever, and it is that memory which has sustained him throughout his life, nothing else. If there is anything which he has cherished deeply in his life till the present and will continue to cherish in the future, it is the moment of dedication.

Happiness and suffering are both traumas. Ego satisfaction is a trauma, of course, where the ego expands and you feel on top of the world. Conflict is a trauma, ego deflation is a trauma. You don’t know where you are. There is no recognition, there is no stability of status, mind, emotions and feelings. A person who gets swayed by such things is not a guru, a sadhaka or an aspirant; he is just an ordinary person.

There is no question of whether to be the guru or the disciple. Guruship is a label which other people put on

you, and for a devoted, dedicated person that label has no meaning. You are what you are. Discipleship is the label which you put on yourself, and that should have a meaning because it is your innermost feeling, based on respect, faith, devotion, dedication and surrender. There is no guruship, only discipleship.

I have seen this to be true in the life of Paramahamsaji. I have felt it to be true in my thinking and analysis of different natures and people. I believe it to be true because it is this belief which brings me closer to my guru Paramahamsaji, every moment.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

REMINISCENCES

Extracts

Paramahamsaji has said many times that one who lives in the ashram does not need to do sadhana. Sadhana is for those who live at home, with many responsibilities and obligations, but when you live in the ashram, karma yoga should be predominant. If you have a little time then practise some asana, pranayama, mantra japa, and so on, but it shouldn't be the whole of your life in the ashram. We should always put the emphasis on karma yoga and do everything with perfection, dedication, love and surrender.

Learn to live alone

There is another important thing which Paramahamsaji always told us. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to go to Rikhia and he repeated it, "If you can learn how to live alone in the ashram, only concerned with your karma yoga and your guru, you will cross the ocean of samsara." So this is the test – *Eka Niranjan*! We can never become like Paramahamsaji, but we can at least take one step and do at least one percent of what he does and if we do that much,

we will never be unhappy in the ashram. We will always feel blissful, happy, peaceful and contented.

The second thing Paramahamsaji said was, “*Do garbar.*” Two means mischief. When you have time, you try to find a friend here or there. Something will go wrong. You cannot clap with one hand, with two hands you can. There is sound only if there are two utensils. If there is only one utensil, there is no noise, no quarrelling, no fighting. Who will you fight with if you are all alone, by yourself? That is the secret of living in the ashram and also in the world outside amongst hundreds and thousands of people. If you live by yourself you won’t have any problems.

The third thing Paramahamsaji said was, “*Teen latpat.*” Three means entanglement. These are all classical words. If you remember them and apply them in your daily lives, they will never lead you into difficulties.

The fourth was, “*Char bantadhar,*” Four means chaos. If you see someone who is happy or contented, the secret is that that person knows how to live alone and how to follow the guru. He or she has nothing to do with a third person. It may be difficult in the beginning, but if you can achieve it, your life will change. It is a mantra siddhi because whatever the guru says is a mantra and a mantra has a power and a force. It can change the direction of your life.

Karma yoga

When I came to the ashram in 1970 for the three-year sannyasa training course, the first thing we were asked to do was to clean the toilets. There were many people who had come for self-realization, self-analysis, spiritual development and evolution, and when they were asked to clean the toilets they became very upset. Many of them left, but those who survived realized that we can clean our utensils!

At that time, Paramahamsaji showed us how to clean the toilets with a piece of cloth and ashes. Nowadays we use a long handled brush and just sweep it around! But during the three years of that sannyasa course, there was no soap

for either the body or the toilet. We used Ganga mud for cleaning the body and ashes for the toilets. It was a really great time – working hard cleaning or in the garden or the kitchen, with our whole minds. It was fantastic. However, karma yoga is a topic we have to experience rather than talk about.

Early life

It was a habit of my parents to often invite saints and swamis. I used to attend their satsangs. Sometimes there was kirtan which I would attend at night. After some time, there were some spiritual enquiries: Who is God and where does He live? Who is superior? Who is inferior? Is Rama superior? Is Shiva superior? Who should I worship and where will I find him? I used to ask these noble persons these questions, and they would tell me, “Until you find your guru you will not learn anything.” So I started searching for my guru.

One day I was very restless. The previous night, my uncle, who was a great tantric, had given me the sadhana of how to get a guru. That sadhana had to be done at night. After doing it I became very restless. I prayed that I would not live for even one more day in that house. I was coming nearer to my guru and I felt that something unique was going to happen to prove that.

Finding the guru

That same day Swami Satyananda came to the city and when I saw him, heard him and met him, I felt very sure that for the rest of my life he was the personality who was going to guide me, without any question, without any doubt. Then I thought, “How can I live near him?” I didn’t know that he was going to start the three-year sannyasa training course in 1970. He had enrolled 108 persons and I was one of them. I was so lucky! So I went. There were no difficulties leaving the family and home because I was happy. Everything that had happened to me previously had prepared me and so I came to Munger.

I entered through a little gate, which at that time was painted green. I can remember the whole thing! Whenever I close my eyes, I can visualize the first time I came to the ashram and entered through that gate. Then I was called in front of him and that was an extraordinary experience. He was not and is not a normal human being. His whole body was shining like a heavenly force. Every day of the course was special. Every second, every minute, every day, every month, every year – there was not a single moment that was not extraordinary.

I used to be afraid of facing Paramahamsaji. I didn't know why. It was a respectful fear. I always used to sit behind him. One day I was very sick and not getting better. That day, he asked me to sit in front of him and so I did. He looked at me and I looked at him, and that was that. You see, the guru is so great that if you develop faith in him, it becomes a positive force within you. The guru's mind is a mind without confusion, without second thoughts. If we can develop that, we will experience miracles every day. A miracle means something the ordinary mind can't understand or comprehend. I could see by his look that I was being cured, and the next moment I was better. My life has been full of such experiences.

Live in the present

The main teaching I have received from Paramahamsaji is how to live in the present. The most beautiful thing that we can do is learn how to enjoy the present life. If we can learn to live in the present, accepting positively what we have today, accepting the people around us, appreciating the items we have, then that is best. We can transcend time and space. We can gain high experiences if we can enjoy the present moment. That is the main teaching which most people fail because they are thinking of the future and the past, not of the present.

After the course was over, Paramahamsaji asked me three or four times, "Do you want to go to foreign countries to

teach yoga?” I said, “No, I am afraid of that bird which flies in the sky. I am happy to be here with you.” I was afraid of going anywhere. The fifth time he said, “You have to go because I know where a disciple can progress, where a disciple can best extinguish his samskaras and how he can evolve. If a disciple has a quality, he should share it with others.”

After Paramahamsaji made that decision, I was very nervous because I had not read any books. Even now I have never read any of his books, maybe a few sentences here and there. I knew that in foreign countries people were well-informed and well-read. If I hadn't even read one book, what could I tell them? That was the greatest source of my fear and nervousness.

On the last day he called me and said, “Are you ready?” I said, “Yes Swamiji,” but my pulse was racing. You know a disciple cannot hide anything from the guru! Neither your thoughts nor your desires, emotions, love and hatred. You are transparent. He can see you through and through. So he knew I was nervous. He said, “Bring your bag. I want to see what you are taking with you.” My bag was full of books because I had thought, “One day, I will have some time to read them and talk about them.” He did not allow me to take even one book! He said, “Whatever you have got is sufficient for you and for them. They don't need books. You don't need books.” He gave me a very special look which entered my unconscious, subconscious, superconscious and every level of consciousness, into the depths of my heart. He said, “I will be with you. Don't worry.” That was such a special moment for me.

Become an instrument

Then I departed for Colombia. I was there for ten years continuously and there was not a single day when I did not feel his presence. He was with me then and he is with me now. The guru is a cosmic force and when he is with you, you can do fantastic things. You can do things you didn't know you could. You can be like Hanuman. When you become

the instrument, nothing is impossible. I used to go to many cities and I never had time to prepare my lectures. Just before starting the lecture, I would close my eyes, remember him and say, “You are the only person, the only force who can help me because you know that I don’t know anything – and if you don’t help me, that is your problem because I am representing you.” Then the force would come. I don’t know how I used to say so many things and I don’t even remember them.

—*Swami Kaivalyananda Saraswati*

An unusual Christmas

On the morning of 24th December, we had satsang with Paramahamsaji. It was the first time I had sat near him. I could see his eyes and the expression on his face. He spoke about Jesus and his life in India, world history and many other things. What impressed me mostly was the combination of great strength, simplicity and inner joy. He moved so naturally from pure cheerful laughter to the deepest thoughts and wisdom. This progression was breathtaking. To be quite honest I was hypnotized. It brought to mind the words: “The greatness of water is in its softness, it breaks through rock.” How true this is for such people who have reached great heights of thought and spirit. They are so simple and natural, there is no need to prove anything.

In the afternoon we were granted special permission to see the Alakh Bara. I have always wanted to see the place where Paramahamsaji had done panchagni sadhana, and to see where he lives. This is a sacred place and usually remains out of bounds to visitors. We surrounded the location and became very silent. Some did pranam and touched their foreheads to the wall surrounding the four fireplaces. Only a few people throughout the ages have performed panchagni sadhana. What an honour to know one of them and to be one of his disciples!

—*Swami Yogagyanam Saraswati, Bulgaria*

Darshan for BYB students

Extract

On 3rd and 4th July, 1999, the first group of graduates in Master of Arts (Philosophy) from Bihar Yoga Bharati went to Rikhia to receive the blessings of Paramahansa Satyananda. It was a momentous occasion for everyone as we were conscious that Swami Sivananda's vision, entrusted to his disciple Swami Satyananda and actualized by his disciple Swami Niranjanananda, was responsible for our gaining the honour of darshan that day. That it was to be *darshan* in the true sense of the word, a transcendental vision of reality, was intimated early in our journey.

In the satsang, Paramahansa Satyananda spoke of his guru's vision of a yogic university as a healing agency, because investigating the truths of the scriptures and of one's own real self heals the psyche of mankind at its deepest level. He spoke of civilizations and cultures rising and falling in wave after wave, and how it is possible and necessary for us to rediscover and preserve their most essential truths. He reminded us that in the '60s he had diagnosed yoga as the need of the time, particularly at the level of asana, pranayama, relaxation and therapy.

As the proceedings continued, each graduate individually went forward, called by Swami Niranjanananda, to receive their degree from the hands of Swami Satyananda. The body moved forward of its own accord and allowed eye to eye contact with Paramahamsaji. He could be seen as the rishi from whom *brahmivritti*, the energy connecting us to the source, was streaming out. Questions and insecurities of the heart dissolved before the compassion in his glance, replaced by a beautiful peace and lightness.

—Swami Yogakanti Saraswati, BYB

Finding a balance

Extracts

Jhoolan Utsav, the swing festival of Radha and Krishna, was celebrated at Rikhia in August. Attending this festival opened my eyes to a world so beautiful in its simplicity.

Paramahamsaji tells us that eighty percent of the Indian population live in these villages, the rest of India, the remaining twenty percent, live in the cities, and a small percentage of these are sickeningly wealthy. This is the situation not only in India but globally, where the rich affluent countries, who make up twenty percent of the total population, misuse eighty percent of the resources and leave the remaining twenty percent for the struggling masses. The word 'struggling' suggests suffering and I wonder do they suffer more because they have less material wealth?

My most vivid memory of the festival of Jhoolan is of a three-year-old boy's face, of his intoxicating smile as he listens and dances to the kirtan, as he gazes into the water fountain -- such joy and happiness out of something so simple and pure. He teaches me something so special, so alive he is with innocence and wonder. If only I could experience this happiness out of such simplicity. His life is uncomplicated, without expectation, without disappointment. Living totally in the moment. This feeling was not only with the children but with all the villagers who came to the festival, whether male or female, young or old. It was a highlight in their life.

The spirituality within them is so strong, the devotion, the bhakti, the joy and wonder at the deities sitting on their brightly coloured swings, surrounded by flowers. Yet they have so little, their clothes torn and wet from the rain, their hands clutching the infinite supply of Paramahamsaji's precious prasad.

The Jhoolan festival was organized by Paramahamsaji and all the villagers were invited; it was open house, no one was prevented from coming. Paramahamsaji is living so

closely with these villagers, guiding and encouraging them to support themselves and encouraging them to trust their spiritual heritage, the spirituality which is so much a part of each individual. Would this fade if materialism takes over?

Their spiritual relationship with nature is strong. Living so closely with the elements and having a deep understanding of the laws of nature is their heritage. Paramahamsaji is also encouraging them to use their traditional farming methods – they know the land, they have lived on and with the land for centuries.

The future of that little boy with the intoxicating smile is unknown, as with all of us, but I know that the power of guru, of Paramahamsaji, will always be with him. He has been blessed to be living in a village so close to Rikhia. He has the blessings of living close to God in every possible way. Where his life will go, I do not know, he does not know, but may he always know that he is missing out on nothing! Everything he needs is there for him, as he lives under the umbrella of one of the world's greatest masters.

I pray that we may find the balance on the planet, where the poor can find shelter and food, and the rich can find the peace and happiness in living simply and close to nature.

Paramahamsaji is offering this sacred teaching to the world. He serves the villagers through his endless giving and love and in this way teaches the rest of the world what they need and how they too can serve. Not just to serve others but themselves, inspiring them to remember that they are more than just a physical, material body, but a spirit that is deeply interwoven into nature and the forces of nature around them. This is the path to world and environmental peace.

—Swami Prembhava Saraswati, Australia



Yoga 2000s

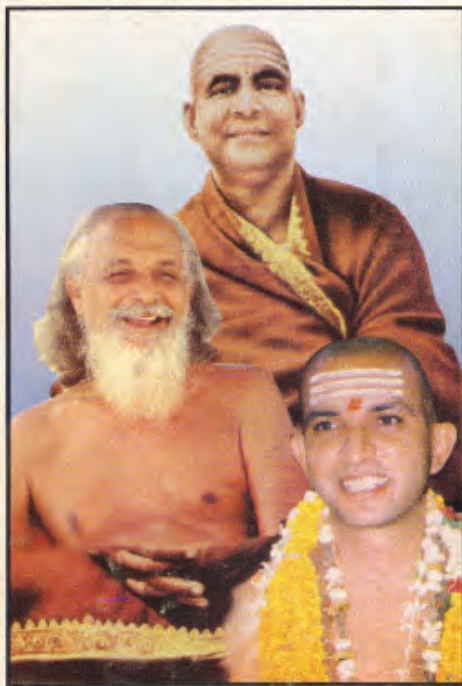
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for the new millennium



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THE GROWTH OF SATYANANDA YOGA – BIHAR YOGA

In order to understand the growth and development of the Satyananda Yoga Tradition, also known as the Bihar Yoga Tradition, we need to know what the components are, and what makes it a specialized school in the entire tradition of yoga.

Fifty years ago, the philosophical side of yoga was known to a few, but nobody knew the practical side. It was believed that yoga was meant for renunciates, sadhus and sannyasins who had renounced everything and had left the pursuits of the world for a life of contemplation, meditation, reflection, introversion and isolation; that it was a way to salvation which an ordinary person in society could not adopt without renouncing some major attachments, desires, ambitions and efforts in life. Yoga was known as a philosophy only, as a form of discipline which could be used to strengthen one's spirit, mind, body and life. The theoretical knowledge was brought to the public by Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharishi, Swami Kuvalayananda, Baba Ram Das, Swami Sivananda, Yogi Ramacharaka and others in this past century.

All these people followed an already established tradition or school of yoga. There were only two established schools of yoga: the Southern school and the Northern school. Yoga

as taught and practised by the rishis, munis and tapasvis in the Gangetic belt, the Narmada belt and the Himalayan belt was known as the Northern school. The Southern school was the yoga practised and envisioned by the southern group of sadhus and saints, renunciates and recluses, mystics and siddhas. Today the main propagator of the Southern school of yoga is T. Krishnamacharya, the teacher of Deshikachar and Iyengar. The Southern school believes that ultimate perfection can be achieved by attaining total physical perfection. Hatha yogis also believe in this principle.

The Northern school is a more meditative yoga, having as its basis the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. In the *Yoga Sutras*, the emphasis is on mind management, thought management, and hatha yoga finds very little mention. Sage Patanjali's yoga is recognized as the Northern school of yoga.

In the Northern school of yoga there are different *paramparas*, traditions and cultures. There is even a tradition of hatha yogis. There is a tradition of kriya yogis, a tradition of kundalini yogis, there are not only raja yogis but also jnana yogis and bhakti yogis. All these yogis had one thing in common: yoga, a practice and discipline through which it becomes possible to strengthen one's nature, to realize the human spirit, and to awaken the inherent potential to become a balanced, perfect human being. Human beings can attain perfection in one thing, twenty things, in all the expressions of life. To attain this end many branches developed in the Northern school of yoga.

Yoga has two origins, one from the tantras and one from the Vedas. The tantras developed a philosophy and a set of practices which in the tantric tradition are known as *yogachara*, conduct for people who practise tantra through yoga. The vedic tradition describes yoga in the form of the Upanishads. Each Upanishad represents a line of learning, a tradition, a *parampara*. Yoga became the process encompassing the body and the mind, leading to the experience of spirit. This is how the vedic and tantric traditions viewed yoga.

It was only in the last fifty years that visionary sadhus felt that yoga was going to be the need of society in the future. In the Northern school of yoga the person who set the ball rolling was our paramguru, Swami Sivananda. He gave yoga a dynamic twist, bringing it out from philosophy and into practice. Although the Dashnami sannyasa parampara to which we belong follows a vedantic tradition, not a yogic one, in the early 1940s Swami Sivananda started training his sannyasin disciples in the practicalities of yoga. He taught them hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, mantra yoga, every kind of yoga as found in the scriptures. Swami Sivananda gave an understanding of yoga to everyone as a way to further develop their own lives, either as sannyasins, as yogis or as householders.

His teaching was so inspiring that many of his sannyasin disciples emerged from the ashram with mandates to propagate yoga. Each disciple emphasized a particular theme. Swami Satchidananda, who founded the Integral Yoga Movement in the USA, emphasized components of hatha yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. Swami Vishnu-devananda, whose main centre is in Canada, established many Sivananda Yoga Vedanta centres teaching hatha yoga. Swami Venkateshananda taught raja yoga in Mauritius. Our guru, Swami Satyananda, who was also given a mandate to teach yoga as part of his sadhana in life, emphasized integral yoga, components of all the yogas, with more emphasis on tantric yoga.

This system of tantric yoga involves the practice of kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga, the advanced stages of pratyahara and dharana, and the advanced stages of dhyana and samadhi. From the vedic side, Sri Swamiji took the components of bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga, and the concept of the chakras, and developed a system of meditation. He took the system of meditation from the tantras and the Vedas and these meditations were later published in 1974 in the book

Meditations from the Tantras. The initial teachings were published in 1965 in the book *Mechanics of Meditation: Practices for Peace*. Sri Swamiji was the first person to bring the yogic side of tantra to the forefront. As far back as 1971 a book named *Tantra-Yoga Panorama* was published in which Sri Swamiji explained the concepts of tantra as applicable to the needs of today's society.

Swami Satyananda inspired people to come to terms with themselves through right and discriminative behaviour, action and speech, thus bringing about a transformation of human personality. When Sri Swamiji first founded the Bihar School of Yoga, it was as the culmination of a wish of Swami Sivananda's to develop an integrated path of yoga. As Sri Swamiji was pioneering the bringing of yoga to the public at large and the breaking down of old myths, outside India this Bihar Yoga system is known as the Satyananda Yoga Tradition.

Sri Swamiji's method of teaching

When Sri Swamiji left Rishikesh in 1956 with the mandate and blessings of his guru Swami Sivananda, he travelled throughout India with the purpose of understanding the needs of society. He travelled from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka, from Pakistan to Burma, trying to assess what society needed. Sri Swamiji felt that the vedantic tradition, as a philosophy, would not be able to help society, rather it needed practical foundations. The practical foundations of this tradition were provided by the tantras through yoga. Sri Swamiji was able to assess that yoga would become the need of people at large, not as a means of salvation but as a means of bringing immediate relief to whatever psychosomatic imbalances were being experienced, affecting their physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual health.

Sri Swamiji devised two approaches for attaining health in a positive way, for developing an integrated, open and balanced character, and for encouraging people to face life. The first approach involved understanding human nature, the mind, psyche and spirit through the practices

and processes of raja yoga; overcoming the most immediate obstacles such as frustration and ego, and developing homogeneous and harmonious actions through karma yoga; channelling of the emotions through bhakti yoga; being able to look within and without with peace of mind through jnana yoga; and the ability to go deeper into sadhana through kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, nada yoga, swara yoga, mantra yoga and many other yogas. This became one approach that was propagated by Sri Swamiji.

The other approach became lifestyle, the ability to look at life differently, to see pain and suffering as indicators of human effort and involvement with one's karmas. The teaching and training in lifestyle also took different forms. Many people take up yoga to relieve a stressful condition, but Sri Swamiji encouraged the incorporation of yoga into the lifestyle. He provided an alternative lifestyle by reviving the tradition of sannyasa, emphasizing the spiritual right of everyone to become a sannyasin once in their lifetime. Through sannyasa, Sri Swamiji helped many people by inspiring them to adopt yoga as part of their lifestyle. He helped many people by teaching yoga as therapy. He helped many people by teaching yoga as a way to attain inner peace. He helped people according to their needs. For Sri Swamiji, yoga was applicable to everyone.

In 1964, in his first public conference in Munger, Sri Swamiji said, "Munger will become the centre of yoga for the whole world and it will find a place on the world map." Many people wondered whether he was saying the right thing, but today those words of Sri Swamiji's are coming true.

Sri Swamiji had a specific method of teaching people of different countries, races and beliefs. He was the first yoga teacher from India who went to the west and taught yoga in a very specific manner. In 1968 Sri Swamiji undertook his first world tour. For six months he was away from Munger and during this time he planted the seeds of yoga outside India. He not only spoke about the theory of yoga in practical and scientific terms, making it accessible to human

understanding, he also gave a set of yoga practices to people so that they could personally experience the yogic process. In subsequent tours, he taught another set of practices and principles so that further understanding was given about yoga in relation to the human body, mind, psychology, personality, beliefs and the betterment of human qualities.

In this way, Sri Swamiji always planned what he would teach on a particular trip. His plan had many components: asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma, pratyahara techniques, kriya techniques, kundalini yoga techniques, chakra techniques, and to shatter the misconceptions about yoga that people had, to give them encouragement and hope. Prior to this time, nobody taught pranayama; it was always a taboo subject. This was the belief, even in Europe, and definitely in India. From Europe yoga spread all around the world, and Sri Swamiji played a vital role in this development.

Sri Swamiji's way of teaching gave us a great deal without our feeling that it was a lot; however, on reflection, one would realize that one had been given enough for a lifetime. This was the natural ability of Sri Swamiji. In all our centres around the world, whether in the United Kingdom, Europe, South America or Australia, he would give a different package on each visit, thus increasing the knowledge and understanding of yoga. The depth of the yoga practices became known and I attribute the majority of this change to Sri Swamiji's efforts.

Sri Swamiji's style of explaining yoga was unique. He would talk about every dimension of yoga, physiological, psychological and spiritual. Sri Swamiji saw a person not as a body, but as composed of the qualities of head, heart and hands, intellect, emotion and action, and he would try to access all three dimensions. Those people who have received this yoga training from Sri Swamiji are indeed very fortunate. Today we recognize that out of all the different traditions in the world, the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga system is the one which attempts to integrate the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of yoga into each practice.

Experimentation and research

Experimentation and research is the central theme of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga. When Sri Swamiji was in Rishikesh and saw Swami Sivananda teaching yoga to his disciples, he not only learnt what was being taught but also studied the various systems and schools of thought and the scriptures. He developed his own practical and deep understanding of the practices of yoga. Sri Swamiji always said, “Experiment with it first, adopt it later.”

From the beginning he started the process of experimentation. He experimented with knowledge from the scriptures and gave it a practical shape in the form of asanas. The pawanmuktasana series, the shakti bandhas and the grouping of the various asanas according to position were all created by Sri Swamiji in the early days. He also created the system of pranayama that today is widely taught around the world.

Sri Swamiji discovered various meditations from the tantras which he taught in classes in the form of antar mouna, ajapa japa, trataka, chidakasha dharana, prana vidya and yoga nidra. He experimented on some of the swamis with these practices. I was one person who had the honour of being experimented upon by Sri Swamiji in yoga nidra. In this way, he experimented with the individual practices of yoga, observed their effects and wrote them down.

The entire contents of the books that have come out from the Bihar School of Yoga are the results of the experiments conducted by Sri Swamiji in the early days. In the book *Yoga Nidra*, the different stages of yoga nidra according to the tantric system of nyasa were revealed. The series of pratyahara meditations, the different stages of antar mouna, ajapa japa and prana vidya, the different practices of kriya and kundalini yoga are all contained in the Bihar School of Yoga texts.

Sri Swamiji was the first person to write a magnum opus on the subject of kriya yoga, which until then had been a taboo subject taught in secret to a select few. He not only broke this taboo, but he made the whole process of kriya

yoga into a three-year postal course, distilling the essence of the practices and giving them a definite form and sequence in which to be practised.

Sri Swamiji was the first person to explain the role of mudras and bandhas scientifically. Until then mudras and bandhas were literally just concepts. Never before had anyone explained them in a practical and scientific way. The Bihar School of Yoga publications such as *Moolabandha: The Master Key*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes* and *Yogic Management of Common Diseases* are examples of the depth of knowledge that Sri Swamiji conveyed to his sannyasin disciples. All these books convey the thoughts behind his yogic mission.

When Sri Swamiji established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963 at the old Sivananda ashram in Munger, he conducted a series of training courses: a nine-month Teacher Training course, then a six-month Teacher Training course, then a three-month Teacher Training course, and ultimately the one-month Teacher Training course. It was Sri Swamiji's wish that people should have a deep, thorough and experiential understanding of yoga, along with an in-depth knowledge of yoga in relation to their lifestyle, thoughts and environment. People came from every part of the world: Australia, Japan, Europe, North and South America, as well as India, to attend these training courses.

In these courses Sri Swamiji inspired the concept of scientific investigation into the practices of yoga. The first fundamental yogic research on asanas was conducted in Poland in 1968 by T. Pasek and Dr W. Romanowski from the Department of Physiology, Academy of Physical Education, Warsaw. A thorough study was carried out using physiological, biological and psychological methods into the effects of *śirshasana*, headstand, and other major asanas on the human anatomy, the brain, cardiac, circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems.

At the same time Sri Swamiji inspired yogic research in Bihar. In 1968, with Dr Sreenivas, Director of the Indira

Gandhi Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Patna, the first research into the effects of yoga on reversing heart disease was conducted for six months, and the results published in *The Effects of Yoga on Hypertension*.

In 1978, research into the effects of yoga on respiratory disorders was conducted by Raipur Medical College, assisted by Satya Darshan Yogashram, under the guidance of Sri Swamiji. Research into the effects of yoga on skin diseases was conducted by an Ayurvedic college in Raipur under the guidance of Sri Swamiji. In 1978 the Burla Medical College in Sambalpur, Orissa, conducted research into the yogic management of diabetes, involving hundreds of patients in Orissa, Bihar and Bengal. The conclusion was reached that non-insulin dependent diabetes was no longer incurable and could be easily managed through the practices of yoga.

Prior to this time, yoga had been taught mainly for physical fitness and body building. However, when some of the research results began to emerge, this idea changed. Other independent organizations also started to conduct yogic research. A significant contribution was made by Swami Rama of the Himalayan Institute, in the United States, who was voluntarily able to stop his heartbeat for an extended period of time. Another contribution to yogic research was made in the United States by Swami Nadabrahmananda, who was able to perform total *kumbhaka*, breath retention, for forty-five minutes in an airtight chamber while playing the tabla. In the same way, many swamis in India also subjected themselves to and encouraging scientific study and significant developments in yogic understanding have come about as a result of their contributions.

In the early seventies Sri Swamiji tried to introduce yoga into the education system in India, but it did not happen at that time. However, he was able to bring glimpses of yoga to Europe through the agency of RYE (Research on Yoga in Education), established in 1977 by Micheline Flak, Swami Yogabhakti, in Paris, with centres today in many countries of the world; and through YES (Yoga Education at

School), established in Canada by Swami Arundhati. These organizations teach yoga so that students can be educated in a classroom environment, as well as at home. When the positive effect of teaching yoga to children in overseas countries was seen, the government of India decided in 1996 to include yoga in its national syllabus so that students could receive training from school age. The decision has been made, but the resources are not yet available.

In the same way, after seeing the results of the research into respiratory, cardiac, digestive, skeletal, muscular and nervous disorders, and the role that yogic practices played in speeding up healing, many medical colleges in India decided to adopt yoga. In 1993 the government of Bihar accepted the inclusion of yoga into the MBBS syllabus. The Bihar School of Yoga was asked to conduct yoga therapy training in eight government-managed medical colleges in Bihar. For two years, doctors and swamis from the Bihar School of Yoga gave training in yoga therapy to the medical students in these different medical colleges. As a result, the Bihar branch of the Indian Medical Association recommended to the central body, the Indian Medical Council in New Delhi, that yoga be made a part of the MBBS syllabus. This recommendation is under consideration at present. The government of Bihar has also officially resolved to train medical practitioners in the principles and practices of yoga therapy at the Bihar School of Yoga.

In addition, the Health Department of the government of Bihar identified a series of ailments that could be managed through the simple practices of asana, pranayama and shatkarma. A comprehensive list of thirty-seven ailments was elaborated, which find mention in the book *Yogic Management of Common Diseases*.

Sri Swamiji used to encourage each yoga teacher to adopt one area in which to specialize. In this way he created many people who were well-versed in one particular branch of yoga. The intensity of the scientific research increased in the course of time. In Australia, Dr Swami Shankardevananda investigated

the role of pawanmuktasana, specifically the muscular movement that takes place while performing the asana. In Canada Swami Arundhati is doing research into blood pressure levels during the performance of the shatkarmas.

Even after Sri Swamiji left the ashram in 1988, he encouraged us to continue taking yoga to different sectors of society. In 1994, swamis from the Bihar School of Yoga conducted a study involving the army. It took them to Siachen glacier base camp, where they experienced the conditions that army personnel underwent and devised a program of yoga to manage these conditions. They went to Bikaner, in Rajasthan, experienced the desert conditions and formulated a yogic management program, teaching and training the army personnel. As a result the army has now decided to train a unit using yoga practices and to evaluate the differences between those receiving yoga training and those receiving regular training. This project is at present pending before the army and Bihar Yoga Bharati and will begin in the near future.

In 1994 I was invited to an International Education Conference in Paris organized by RYE. The deliberations were on how yoga can help in the classroom environment. As a result of the Paris declaration, representatives from seventeen countries decided to introduce yoga as part of their educational system. In March this year there is another conference in Paris which I will be attending to discuss the role of yoga in education.

Another project is the prison program begun in 1994, conducted by the swamis of the Bihar School of Yoga. Twenty-four prisons in Bihar are under the hold of yoga. Every year, on a regular basis, a month long training program takes place in these prisons. Over a period of two years we have trained over 450 'lifers' as yoga teachers, all receiving official certification. They are also teaching yoga to their fellow prisoners wherever requested. Moreover, the government of Bihar has also decided to reduce the prisoners' sentences according to their interest in yoga.

Yoga has also been taken to sporting bodies. In 1999 training programs have been conducted for the Sports Authority of India in Calcutta and New Delhi.

In this way, the research work that Sri Swamiji started with the foundation of the Bihar School of Yoga still continues today in different forms and ways. Bihar Yoga Bharati and the Satyananda Yoga Academy in Australia hope to do joint fundamental research into asanas, pranayama, mudras and bandhas. There are many other projects being conceived all the time.

One project in which all of the swamis involve themselves is Sita Kalyanam, which is now held every year in Rikhia, the *tapobhoomi*, sadhana place, of Swami Satyananda. Sivananda Math, a charitable institution created in 1984 by Sri Swamiji, has adopted one whole panchayat (district) in Rikhia with many villages and approximately ten thousand families. Every year each family is provided with all the basic necessities, from clothing, kitchenware, personal, communal and social items, to housing, employment, education and healthcare. Different activities take place in which the swamis are involved from time to time as part of their sadhana and discipline.

This discussion reflects the energy that Sri Swamiji infused into the system of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga. Satyananda Yoga is different to ordinary yogas. One reason is that Satyananda Yoga is an evolving yoga; it is a school where a concept is developed. When yoga becomes a part of the human environment, the human need and eventually a part of human life and culture, it becomes universal and dynamic, progressive and inspiring. Satyananda Yoga, also known as Bihar Yoga, fits into this category. It is an evolving yoga. The ancient traditions are continually being looked into and the knowledge brought out into the open, not on any one specific subject, but on the total development of human nature and personality in yoga.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Visit to Rikhia

On 25th October I took a train to Deoghar, Bihar, in order to visit a gurubhai of mine whom I had not seen for quite some years. He is Swami Satyananda, who has lived at Rikhia as an avadhoota sannyasin for eleven years, practising the severe austerity of Panchagni tapas. He performed this difficult tapasya for six continuous years. Each year, from Makar Sankranti to Karka Sankranti, he sat for six months at a stretch under the sun with four other fires behind and before him and to his right and his left. This was from sunrise in the morning until sunset in the evening.

Sri Swamiji had also been wishing to meet me. I arrived on the morning of 26th October and stayed for four days until the night of 29th October. It was a truly revealing experience. He is the founder of the International Yoga Fellowship (1956) and the Bihar School of Yoga (1963), which has its headquarters in Munger, Bihar. The Bihar School of Yoga has become a worldwide organization, conducting systematic courses and giving yoga training and other skills to thousands of aspiring students from all over the world.

From 1968 onwards Swami Satyananda visited many countries abroad, but in September 1988 he decided to withdraw from all activities and secluded himself in a small village. This village is named Rikhiadham and has become a holy place because a Dashnami sannyasin has settled down there. Swami Satyananda calls his ashram Sivananda Math. It has a number of residential quarters, each one of which contains a temple dedicated to an expression of divinity. I stayed in the Dattatreya Kutir. There is a Raghunath Kutir, a Ganesh Kutir, a Sivananda and Shankaracharya temple known as Akhara.

Sivananda Math runs a forty-bed charitable hospital called Amrit Kalash, with indoor and outdoor sections, both working with sincerity. The main objective of the Math is to uplift the underdeveloped rural people and give them a sense of self-respect. Literacy is encouraged. The Math

serves the village community in a number of important ways. It bores tube wells for borification. It builds houses for those who have no dwelling. Roads are constructed to previously inaccessible areas. Help is given to set up schools. Very old and somewhat disabled people beyond the age of sixty-five years are given Rs 200/- per month as a sort of personal pension so that they need never go for even a day without a daily meal.

Another revolutionary measure is the successful abolition of the unfair and degrading treatment meted out to the unfortunate widows in Hindu society. Swami Satyananda has succeeded in abolishing the term 'vidhava'. The widows are now addressed as 'divya', for they represent an aspect of the Divine Mother. The villagers have accepted the idea of seeing these divyas wearing normal saris like other women as well as a few simple ornaments, except for sindoor and the mangalasutra. Sri Swamiji helps in their rehabilitation and assists them in higher education if they wish. I have never seen the like of it anywhere else in the whole of Bharatavarsha.

To provide employment for younger people he prompts his devotees to give three wheelers, tempos and even tractors. If they have to cover a long distance to go to their workplace, a bicycle, scooter or motorcycle is gifted to them.

However, the most extraordinary seva is the gift suitcase presented to newly-wed couples. The contents of this suitcase are comprehensive and selected with great thought. The overall cost of the suitcase and contents comes to between Rs 60,000/- to Rs 65,000/-. The contents include a set of gold and silver jewellery for face, hands, feet and toes, a complete daily needs set containing a large tube of toothpaste, toothbrush, tongue cleaner, cake of soap, hair oil and a box of bangles. A cosmetic set in a plastic bag contains nail polish, kajol, sindoor, bindi, hairclips, ribbon, alata, face powder, lipstick and comb. Also included are a stainless steel thali, glass and katori, shawl, chunri, sari, pants and shirt, handkerchief and towel plus underwear and

a colourful gamcha. Wrist watches for both the bride and the bridegroom, socks for both, a pair of lady's shoes and a pen set in a box are also part of the gift suitcase.

Swami Satyananda's band of sannyasins and brahma-charis, who number nearly one hundred in Munger and Deoghar, are deeply devoted to him and ever ready at his service. To see their devotion, their spirit of guru seva as well as their selfless service to the poor villagers is an elevating experience in itself. During my stay Swami Niranjan took me to visit a cluster of very ancient temples nearby. The local belief is that these temples are thousands of years old, dating back much before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Our departure from Rikhia on 29th October was very late at night. No matter how much I requested Swami Satyanandaji to kindly retire for the night at his usual routine hour, he was not prepared to listen to me and insisted upon coming out from his quarters and seeing me off in the Math car even at that midnight hour. This visit to Sivananda Math at Rikhiadham was the most important part of my October program. It has been a visit that has given me great satisfaction and very great happiness.

—Swami Chidananda Saraswati
*President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh,
and a guru brother of Swami Satyananda*



2002

SWAMI SATYANANDA'S YOGA DARSHAN

The yoga darshan or philosophy of Swami Satyananda is simple. Since the inception of the Bihar School of Yoga at Sivanandashram, Lal Darwaja, in 1963, Sri Swamiji, as a yoga teacher, taught courses and classes, ran therapy courses, yoga sadhana programs and teacher training courses. What was the purpose behind developing the sequences and components of yoga that he did? Why didn't he follow the simple path of jnana marga, as is the tradition of sannyasins?

In the process of developing yoga, Sri Swamiji's perception was the growth of the total human being, the homogeneous human personality. Homogeneity of human personality lay in proper coordination, cooperation, association and expression of the qualities of head, heart and hands. It is as simple as that. This is the total yoga darshan as developed by Swami Satyananda.

Head

From time immemorial people have been plagued by one eternal question: how to deal with the mind? Arjuna asked Krishna the same question in the *Bhagavad Gita*. How does one deal with this mind which is more subtle than air and can never be grasped or held? Today we ask the same question. How can we manage our mind? How can we

manage our desires, aspirations, thoughts and ideas? How can we give them a practical approach? How can we have the clarity and perception of mind to understand what is relevant and irrelevant?

In view of these various aspects that trouble a human being, Sri Swamiji developed the complete system of pratyahara. Even today in society people don't know the difference between pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Many teachers say they teach meditation without even understanding the concepts of pratyahara and dharana. Sri Swamiji defined the concept, the applicability and the techniques of pratyahara. He established yoga nidra as the first technique of pratyahara. He developed other systems of concentration and meditation which he found in the tantras. The techniques of antar mouna and ajapa japa evolved as a result. Ajapa japa had been talked about for thousands of years, but no one had actually defined the practice. Sri Swamiji clarified the stages of the practice and the movement of the breath and mantra in the psychic passages. He gave a practical, understandable and attainable concept and structure to each practice. He defined the stages of antar mouna, chidakasha dharana and yoga nidra.

Sri Swamiji was the first to describe the process, salient points and techniques of prana vidya, which in its elementary form is known today as Reiki. He introduced pranayama as a part of daily yoga sadhana. Twenty years ago people used to say that pranayama was dangerous. Other institutions did not teach pranayama as an integral part of a yoga class, only teachers of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga Tradition. The pranayama techniques you are learning today are the teachings of Sri Swamiji. Which pranayamas are heating, or cooling, or balancing, their effects on different states of the body, at different times of the day, in different climates, in different moods, how to develop the ability of the lungs to inhale, to exhale, to retain the breath – that was the sequence as Sri Swamiji taught it.

Sri Swamiji explained and systematized the concept of bandhas and mudras. He simplified the entire system

of hatha yoga shatkriyas by combining the techniques in one simplified version – poorna shankhaprakshalana. Shankhaprakshalana is not found in other yogic literature, and basti, dhauti, nauli and neti are discussed as separate techniques.

There are only two systems of kriya yoga existing in the world. One has come down from Babaji, who it is said was the creator and the founder. There have been many teachers in that line, the well-known ones being Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Yukteshwar and Lahiri Mahashaya. The other system of kriya yoga was discovered by Sri Swamiji from the tantras. When kriya yoga was a secret with the belief that it could only be passed from guru to the most intimate disciple in the most intimate form, Sri Swamiji started a three-year postal correspondence course, and that book today is the only authentic encyclopaedia of yoga in existence.

Swami Vivekananda spoke on yoga but never taught yoga, never taught asana or pranayama, he only spoke in theory. He did not develop yoga, he only presented the scriptural, philosophical aspect of yoga in everyday language. It was Swami Satyananda who linked the yogic concepts to the body, for example, which chakra corresponds to which nadi, which gland, which state of mind. Many people have done research on that subject. Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, in his book *Theories of the Chakras*, refers to the philosophy and practices of Swami Satyananda. Dr Serena Roney-Dougal, author of *Where Science and Magic Meet*, discovered the role, functions and benefits of the chakras and their correspondence with the psychophysiological system. Intellectuals and thinkers around the world have accepted and worked on these ideas.

The original APMB, which was published in 1968, had seventy pages. Today APMB has over five hundred pages, but in the original content Swami Satyananda had described the physiological, psychological and spiritual benefits, the sequences we are following today and what has been discovered by medical, scientific and therapeutic research.

Heart and hands

Swami Satyananda also developed a process for opening the heart and created a system through which it could be done. He also created a system for developing the qualities of the hands by insisting that Ganga Darshan is a gurukul, despite it having attained university status. This structure and discipline is not only an institutional mandate, it is to create an environment where one can develop the qualities of the hands by being creative. Creativity is not dissipation. People often ask how they can be creative in the ashram when there is limited scope and areas for work, performance and living. There may be more options to be creative outside, but there are distractions too. For the training to become creative, one has to focus on one thing, digging one hole five hundred feet deep, not fifty holes ten feet deep.

Sri Swamiji says clearly that he is what he is today because of what he underwent and experienced in his guru's ashram. That has made him what he is today. In his message to the participants of the Sannyasa Course he mentions that in his guru's ashram he lived with a passion for work. He emphasized the aspect of karma yoga and gave it a practical form, a body, and it became part of the ashram culture. Otherwise karma yoga was only a philosophy, do the action and don't expect any results or fruits. Everyone talks about it, but where is the place where you can confront your mind, your ideas, your nature, your perceptions, your conflicts. Only then can karma yoga become a part of life and only then are we able to change our perceptions and attitudes.

In time the aspect of the heart will turn into bhakti, not the blind bhakti which is expressed outside, not idol worship, but bhakti in the form of a connection, a feeling, not only with God but with God manifest in each individual being. As Sri Swamiji's mission has evolved, we are also seeing different areas being developed. Sivananda Math is an expression of bhakti. The act may be classified as social service, but the aim has been bhakti. Sri Swamiji has used the word *atmabhava*, oneness, not with God which is too distant a reality, but with

the touchable, palpable, physical God. By connecting with the physical there is the hope that there may be a connection with the transcendental.

Sri Swamiji is showing a path, not developing a philosophy as Buddha or Mahavir or others did. He is teaching and presenting a way of life in a practical form. I am not eulogizing him, I am appreciating the work and effort which was put into developing a complex system for the growth of head, heart and hands. Therefore, the development of yoga in today's age has been the effort of Swami Satyananda.

There are many excellent institutions in the world teaching hatha yoga or raja yoga or jnana yoga or bhakti yoga, and each path or tradition or system has its own uniqueness and speciality. However, the most comprehensive and most defined yoga is Bihar Yoga, which has to be lived to be experienced, not learned in a classroom. That is the difference. We can learn yoga in a classroom situation anywhere in the world. There are many universities or schools offering yoga training, but it is only intellectual. There are many centres and individual teachers who are teaching yoga throughout the world, but it is only a physical component, an hour of asana, pranayama and relaxation.

Swami Satyananda was the first to combine a direction for the development of the mind, a direction for the movement of the heart and a direction for the creativity of the hands, all three, keeping in view the development of human potential, consciousness and energy. Sri Swamiji gave yoga a new life, a new birth; he revived yoga otherwise it would have been lost. Therefore, he is the Patanjali of today. That has been his contribution. People today do not realize Sri Swamiji's contribution to yoga, but tomorrow they will know that he was the Patanjali of this age.

It should be the continual effort of every yoga aspirant and yoga teacher who passes through Ganga Darshan and undergoes training here to maintain the sanctity and sacredness of this yogic process, and to have the feeling

that he/she can have a yogic life, a complete life, a full life. When there are mental problems, head trips, interaction and association problems, manage them. Use the knowledge, the training, the wisdom and the understanding which you are trying to gain and develop. The only message that Sri Swamiji has given is: Don't lose hope in yourself.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

The inspirer

When I first came to the ashram and used to study the *Bhagavad Gita*, I would often come across the verse in which Arjuna asks Krishna, “Tell me how a person of awakened wisdom lives, thinks, acts, speaks, sits, walks, eats?” Reading that verse would conjure up in my mind the image of a yogi, a siddha, who had awakened the kundalini, sometimes looking like Christ, sometimes looking like Buddha, sometimes looking like a sadhu in the remote Himalayan caves. Along with that image would come another question: Who are these people? Such questions continued to preoccupy my mind for many years. Now, when I look at Paramahamsaji, I can see that the statement of the *Bhagavad Gita* is fulfilled in him. How does a person of stable wisdom live? How does a siddha live like an ordinary person?

Paramahamsaji is, of course, my guru, but more than that I see him as an inspirer in my life, one who can inspire new thoughts, new actions, new courage and strength, one who can inspire faith, devotion and compassion. As the inspiration in my life I can find fulfilment by emulating and by living his teachings.

Every time I see him a new aspect, a new dimension opens up before my eyes. Never has there been a person so simple and spontaneous. Never has there been a person who can be so practical and compassionate both at the same time. Never has there been a person who can combine the highest wisdom with easy laughter. All these qualities are becoming more and more predominant in him every day. Today I can

definitely say that, although we have not seen Christ, or Buddha, or other great people who have walked upon this planet, seeing Paramahamsaji one can believe that such people did walk upon this earth once upon a time, and that it is possible for such people to live amidst us and to become examples of inspiration and learning.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

RIKHIA RISHI – KING OF KINGS

In Rikhia the sannyasa flag is flying high in all its original purity, holding the ideals of Manu alive within its folds. The strong wind which blows it spreads the eternal seeds of dharma to the four corners of the earth once more. The myriad bees which come to collect the honey from the flower beneath it sip the nectar of the vedic culture and take it home to their hives throughout the world. The doves which sing softly around it send forth the gentle message of peace and understanding to every human heart which is open to receive.

Due to the vision of a perfected sannyasin, an avadhoota, a bodhisattwa, the seer who raised this flag, the objective of human action will once again become the desire to accomplish the perfection of dharma, to reinstate the highest ideal of one world family – lokasangraha. This is one sannyasin who is revered and held in awe for his total dedication to the welfare and unity of the entire universe. This is one great soul living amongst us today in the Kali Yuga – the Rikhia Rishi (who, like Vishwamitra before him, is a Raja Rishi) – wanting nothing, needing nothing but ‘two rotis and two dhotis’, and living only to serve his neighbours – the whole of humanity. He has said, “He who lives to serve others truly lives!”

Cosmic Bhandaar

He is the Cosmic Bhandaar
sitting beneath the flag,
sending out compassion to the world.

All the world comes to Him
and the whole world is He.

For He is the real sannyasin,
lit by the celestial fire.

Master of the world
and King of Kings.

Glory to this sannyasin.

Glory to the Rikhiya Rishi.

Glory to you! Glory to you!

—*Swami Vibhooti Saraswat, Ireland*

Guru-disciple relationship

We may think that it is nice to have everything we want in life and not face any difficulties or adversities, but in reality this would make us become complacent and life would be very monotonous. In my life I have been fortunate to have met and lived with two men of faith, two gurus – Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjan – and seeing the example in both of them. When I was with Swami Satyananda, living with him and listening to his stories, he used to tell us about his time in his guru's ashram and the experiences he had there. It showed that on every level he totally trusted and totally surrendered to his guru. When that surrender takes place one even starts to look like their guru. In Swami Niranjan's life, again we see this same attitude of total faith and total surrender to his guru, Swami Satyananda. They are both 'gurus and disciples' because a disciple is one who can surrender and who has faith. As long as we cannot manage that we will always remain just aspirants and not true disciples, without that connection that we truly long for with the guru.

—*Swami Sivamurti Saraswati, Greece*

2003

The spirit of yajna

The purpose of yajna is to bring peace and prosperity into people's lives. Swami Satyananda has always worked for these two ideals. He worked for peace and made yoga the medium. Now he is working for prosperity and has made yajna the medium. When Sri Swamiji travelled around India as a parivrajaka for nine years, from 1954 to 1963, he lived in the villages with the poor. Many sannyasins go to big cities and live there for some time collecting disciples and money and imparting their wisdom, but when Sri Swamiji did his pada yatra, he went to the remote areas of the country, not to the cities. Sri Swamiji's life is like the spectrum of a rainbow, he is a multi-faceted personality. He has lived with the affluent and with the poor with the same ease, helping both at the same time.

For peace he used the science and wisdom of yoga. Sri Swamiji has been the major inspirer in the propagation of yoga around the world and Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga is a well-recognized system of yoga. The banner of yoga is flying high throughout the world. Through his efforts, Sri Swamiji brought yoga to everyone, whether in Western countries or Eastern countries, Christians or Muslims, believers or non-believers. He said yoga can help you find peace, yoga can help you overcome all of life's problems and difficulties, because it gives one the ability to choose the correct

solution. Yoga is not a science of miracles, yoga is a science of common sense and Sri Swamiji made yoga the medium to experience, to attain and to live in peace.

Now he is inspiring us to work for the prosperity of one and all and he has made yajna the medium. Yajna literally means production, distribution and enjoyment. The whole world, the whole of creation, thrives only because of production, distribution and enjoyment. There has to be a balance between these three aspects. Everyone accumulates and some distribute, but when there is a balance between accumulation and distribution that is known as *satkarma*, appropriate and righteous action. When there is a balance between accumulation and distribution that is known as yajna. One component of the Rajasooya Yajna is receiving and giving, sharing the prosperity, sharing the plenty, sharing the peace. The Rajasooya Yajna, which was inspired by Sri Swamiji in 2001, represents this vision of finding a balance between accumulation and distribution.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Yajna 2002

Today, 9th December, will bring the culmination of the yajna, which has been built up over the past four days. Swami Niranjanananda suggested yesterday that we fast today for spiritual reasons, and so that people attending the yajna who might not normally benefit from a square meal could have ours. I've skipped breakfast.

Arriving at the area of worship, I guessed it was going to be a red-letter day when I saw the beautiful robe Swamiji was wearing. After a few words of greeting and a brief introduction to the day, we had a rousing kirtan and Swamiji then began to make Paramahamsaji's chair ready for him.

The swamis who were arranged closely around Paramahamsaji's chair stood up, and then Paramahamsaji arrived. He is quite small, looked young and fresh and he was dressed in a robe that matched Swami Niranjan's. Paramahamsaji

settled in his chair, the swamis sat down, and there he was, as if he'd been sitting there for hours, totally relaxed with a few close friends. (I don't know how many people attended the yajna, but it must have been thousands.)

First Paramahamsaji spoke about next year's sankalpa. "Grain will be the gift, in all its shapes and forms." Paramahamsaji says that when a man dies of hunger, God dies, because man is the only creature who knows God. If you feed man, you feed God. Paramahamsaji spoke of the importance of establishing and maintaining rural life both in India and in our own countries too.

When Paramahamsaji talks it feels very intimate, as though he is speaking to you personally. He laughs a lot and is very bubbly and humorous. He explained clearly and simply the various stages of the yajna, so that we could understand what was happening and feel part of it.

The acharyas opened the ceremonies with chanting. Then 108 virgins (one for each aspect of the Goddess), 107 little girls and one little boy, came into the area of worship. The children looked like beautiful dolls dressed in traditional Indian costumes; they were brought in a few at a time by Swamiji and some of the other swamis, holding their hands and leading them to their places up on a table top, so that they could be seen by all. It was very touching to see them all seated, still and quiet, looking out at all the people, obviously feeling the sense of being involved in something very special. In front of each child a place was set for a meal. The virgins were prepared with garlands, then a fire ceremony was conducted for them, their feet were painted and they were given a meal, which they ate without seeming to do too much damage to their outfits; they were very, very well behaved. When the meal was finished, all the virgins filed past Paramahamsaji to receive their prasada, lovely little suitcases full of goodies. Paramahamsaji loved this and did his little girl voice in reply when they greeted him; it was very comical and made the children feel at home.

There was so much going on all the time and it was such a spectacle, I find it hard to recall everything; it was colourful and stimulating. Finally the Goddess was invoked and the sankalpa fulfilled: Peace, prosperity and happiness to all.

Lots more people received gifts, mountains and mountains of them, as they had been doing for the last four days. Many people were brought to Paramahamsaji to be greeted and blessed. It was also good to see Paramahamsaji and Swami Niranjan together. Total love. Swami Niranjan was so tender in his attention to Paramahamsaji, adjusting his garland and head-dress, making sure his microphone was in the right place, looking to every detail of Paramahamsaji's comfort and protective like a father to a child.

Paramahamsaji talked about the Vedas and how the Vedas had sanctioned animal sacrifices at yajna, but Lord Buddha had felt it, and when Paramahamsaji said this he put his hand to his heart, as if this had been where Lord Buddha had felt it. So after Lord Buddha's time white cucumbers were substituted for animals in the sacrifice. A sacrifice had to be made to the Goddess and this was done by Paramahamsaji's representative, Swami Niranjan. The acharyas duly came over and presented Swamiji with quite a fierce looking sword and he went back to the Goddess with them and performed the sacrifice.

Paramahamsaji and Swamiji were both anointed by the acharyas and so was Poorna, Paramahamsaji's dog, who had taken part in the whole festival. The fire ceremony came last and it took much longer on this final day, as the flames had to go higher. This was achieved by pouring melted ghee into the fire. It was fascinating to see the silhouetted figures of Swamiji and the acharyas pouring the ghee through a long pipe into the growing blaze, all the time the acharyas continuing to chant. At the end of the ceremony, fire was offered to everyone present and then water was scattered over us and we all lifted our hands to receive these blessings.

A symbolic wedding between Sita and Rama took place next, the acharyas again chanting the ceremony. Now the rituals were completed.

During the day Paramahamsaji sang here and there between his talks. He explained that in yoga we have peace, in yajna we have prosperity, not in money, but in spiritual wealth, so in fact we have everything, which is what I think we all felt, and what we know in our lives every day through belonging to the Bihar School.

The day seemed to have passed in no time. Paramahamsaji left at the end of the wedding ceremony without any fuss, just as he came, such a beautiful presence, and then he was gone. It had been a wonderful week. I had travelled to India with the sole purpose of seeing Paramahamsaji and my mission was accomplished. He was just delightful in his humour, flowing with fun and laughter and lots and lots of wisdom: you could listen to him forever.

The whole yajna had been organized and conducted with such grace, purity and precision. Swamiji had been anywhere and everywhere the need for him arose, having time and energy for everyone. The gifts, which were so 'what was needed in the moment', had flowed endlessly, we ate delicious food, it was like seeing a miracle happen. No one could fail to be humbled by the sheer scale of the yajna, by its generosity and love, combined with so much practicality and making such a difference to so many people's lives.

It was a wonderful experience to know and be part of it, and to know that I would be able to bring some of Paramahamsaji's love and his sankalpa back home with me to share in my little bit of the world.

—*Elaine Benson, UK*

Swami Sivananda – unique visionary

During the last century three names stand out in the world of yoga: Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. Swami Vivekananda presented the theoretical idea of yoga to the public. Swami Sivananda made yoga a practical subject which could be applied in people's lives, whether to manage one's health, to manage one's confused mind, to manage one's emotional personality, to go into deeper meditative states, to excel in applying the yogic principles in practical life through karma yoga, through seva. Swami Sivananda brought yoga down to practical levels which could be accommodated by the human mind. Many people in the past had tried to do this, but they could not differentiate between the essence of yoga and the garb of spirituality coloured by religious overtones. Therefore, despite their efforts, nobody was able to bring yoga down to a level where it could be understood and practised by everyone. Swami Sivananda did that in all spheres of life. He sowed the seeds of the yoga that emerged as a potential, as a possibility and as a solution to fulfil the vacuum in that particular dimension of life.

This work was carried on by his disciples. Yoga was developed to its highest potential by Swami Satyananda, one of the bright disciples of Swami Sivananda. Swami Sivananda planted the seeds of yoga for use by human society and civilization, and Swami Satyananda defined and explained the process of yoga in scientific form. Swami Sivananda believed that it was the birthright of everyone to experience spirituality in a practical form, in action, in speech and in thought, in all of life's situations. Swami Satyananda further developed this philosophy into a system that is now being recognized as the holistic approach of Satyananda Yoga-Bihar Yoga.

Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda were not concerned with the development of yoga as a practice which people only did for an hour every day in the morning. Rather they made yoga a part of the natural expression in

life and to further develop and expand the horizon of the mind, to develop the human sensitivity to feel for others and to rise beyond petty egocentricity, arrogance, the inability to adjust and accommodate.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Nine days of grace

The satra culminated in a havan on the tenth day, Ramnavmi, with darshan of Sri Swamiji. This almost felt like the fruits of sadhana! In satsang he spoke of how the *Ramayana* has everything within it, all the answers to present-day frustrations, anger and imbalances can be found by just reciting the *Ramayana*, even if we do not know or understand the meaning. The secret can be revealed, but of course one has to have faith and trust. He said that the schoolgirls' chanting was so important as it was sown deep in their consciousness and this is what can change the next generation. Of course just being in the presence and listening to the voice was enough to change something within.

Sri Rama Jaya Rama – that is what I left with. As I write this one month later, I feel that I am just beginning to experience, to understand, that I am witnessing something very powerful unfolding itself, a change at my very core.

No logic, no thoughts, no intellect. Just bhakti, shraddha, trust and complete surrender to the Divine, the Creator and the Creation. 'Nothing that exists, nothing still to come, nor any power or height or depth, nor any created thing, can come between us and the love of God'.

—*Sannyasi Vishalakshi, Bangalore*

2004

A MIRACLE OF GRACE

Extract

During the yajna you have witnessed the miracle of guru's grace and God's grace. The miracle is the transformation of the kanyas. What background have they come from and what kind of future do they have? You may not be aware of their past. They are not from the lower middle class or the middle class or the upper middle class or the higher class. They are from the lowest of the low. They have no opportunities to progress, to develop or to learn. Their life revolves around a few activities like cleaning, sweeping, cooking, child rearing and so forth. Their homes are deprived of all the facilities that you take for granted.

Yet Sri Swamiji knows these people have latent shakti in them and he has entered them. That does not mean that they have become his disciples or that he has become their guru, as you may think through your intellect and logic. Just as prana is in the body, the guru also transmits his shakti in the personality, and that is known as shaktipat. Transmission or transfer of shakti is not even felt or recognized by the recipient, yet the miracle of transformation begins to happen. If you put a seed with a hard shell into water, nothing will happen, but the day you plant it in the ground

an invisible process begins which becomes the cause for the growth, development and nurturing of the seed into a plant, a shrub or a tree in the course of time. That invisible process which takes over the activities of life is known as shaktipat. It is not something that can be understood through logic.

Limitations of intellect

Logic is the main barrier in our lives. After all, Sri Swamiji has entered all of you who are initiated disciples, who are sannyasins or karma sannyasins or yoga practitioners, but do you feel that? Your feeling is limited to your intellect only. You believe, "I have become a disciple, somebody has become my guru." That belief is generated by the thought and by the act which is again guided by the intellect. The desire that somebody should become your guru, the desire that you should become a disciple, is intellectual. You have thought about it, you have chosen somebody, you have decided to become the disciple of somebody, you have decided to follow somebody. It is a decision which has been taken knowingly. The intellect had decided that for you. If the intellect had decided that you should not be here, you would not be here! That is the main cause of failure in life. We fail because we do not allow that grace to possess our body and mind.

As long as there is intellect, innocence cannot manifest. If you make an attempt to manifest that innocence in your life, you will be recognized as a hypocrite, because you are unable to feel the presence of the shakti which guru has infused in you. These kanyas have expressed that. We know – they feel; we use our intellect – they use their heart, their feeling. You can see that they are doing everything here; their presence is everywhere.

This is the miracle you have witnessed, the miracle that the grace of guru can work in a person's life. It is a great inspiration and learning for all of us. It is not something that is happening here for the first time. Christ said in the Bible, "In order to enter the kingdom of heaven you

have to be innocent like a child.” Everyone has expressed this sentiment, and it has been shown to you today by Sri Swamiji.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

The kanyas of Rikhia

By nurturing and developing the kanyas, Sri Swamiji is planting seeds for the future, as these kanyas will be the mothers of the next generation. We will only begin to understand the extent of Sri Swamiji’s vision as the seeds being planted now germinate and grow to their full potential. As mothers, these girls will be better equipped to ‘give’ to their children, as they will have an expanded understanding of themselves and the world.

These girls are the adopted children of Sri Swamiji and have received many gifts in the form of school uniforms, books, stationery and toys which are generously donated from all over the world. However, the greatest gift they are receiving is their exposure to the ashram environment. Through this they are expanding their views of themselves, their capacities, and their dreams and goals for the future. Many of these girls are skilled assistants to their families with the farming, livestock and domestic duties. Now if you were to ask them what they want to do when they grow up, they have ideas ranging from being a nurse, English teacher, tailor, social worker, housewife, engineer, businesswoman, to sannyasin! The reality is that for most their contribution to society will be as mothers of the next generation. Through their contact with Sri Swamiji and the ashram these girls will be mothers with expanded awareness and will rise to the challenge of guiding the children of the future.

The kanyas of Rikhia are ‘spirited’ to say the least. They can be noisy and playful at times, and quiet and concentrated at others. They are a group of dynamic and capable children who through the trust and grace of Sri Swamiji are being able to express their innate potential.

Their regular contact with the ashram provides a safe environment for them to develop and grow.

The kanyas bring colour and light not only to the whole of Rikhia, but to the whole world through the inspiration they brought into the lives of the thousands of people who met them during Sita Kalyanam. With the grace of Sri Swamiji this light will continue to shine ever brighter and will lead us all towards a brighter future.

—*Swami Kriyabhava Saraswati, Australia*

The land of a thousand suns

Extract

In the Puranas, whenever a great deva like Lakshmi, Saraswati, Shiva or Vishnu appears to the rishis, yogis and devotees, it is described as like the rising of a thousand suns. My experience of Rikhia is always like that. After descending from the train and boarding a trekker to the Akhara, I always practise stage one of antar mouna, awareness of the whole environment, and allow all experiences to manifest spontaneously and clearly. Usually the first voices I hear from all sides as we ride through the gorgeous countryside of Jharkhand are greeting me with “Namo Narayana,” prompted by the geru we wear. Especially the voices of children ring out loud and clear, full of vigour, joy and sincere love and goodwill. What magic Sri Swamiji has wrought with that simple device of yoga and tantra – the mantra. Everywhere, those who can see will encounter signposts of the working of Sri Swamiji at so many levels of experience. These little voices coming from all directions all the way to the Akhara awaken in me the inner vision of so many little suns burning brightly and ready to expand in time to the fullness of the sun, the *poorna*.

—*Swami Vasishthananda Saraswati, Canada*

The Rajasooya Yajna

Extract

The yajna is a big family gathering, and we have the joy of meeting our relatives of the Satyananda family from all over India and the rest of the world. As well as giving us the opportunity of reminiscing over the past, we can plan our future together and enjoy the moment. We don't realize it at first, but when we join the movement started by Sri Swamiji, we do become members of a family of thousands of people worldwide dedicated to furthering his uplifting mission and joined by our mutual love and respect for him and for each other.

At one level the yajna was a colourful spectacle, at another a total positive experience, at another a subtle spiritual manifestation, and in other dimensions it was no doubt a transformation of which most of us are completely unaware. We have all been changed by this experience, and our gratitude goes out to Sri Swamiji and all those who worked so hard to make it the success it was.

But there was one more surprise in store for us. Sri Swamiji generously gave individual darshan to us all on the day after the yajna. He had been with us on the day before, and even took part in the organization of the feeding of the kanyas on the last day, but the darshan for us individually was indeed a great blessing and an unforgettable climax to the whole experience.

—*Rishi Vivekananda Saraswati, Australia*

Aspects of transformation at Rikhia

Extract

For anyone who has been able to attend the yajna programs in Rikhia each year in either November or December, over the years it may be possible to recognize a relationship developing with the individual transformation process that takes place there.

Each year before the actual program begins there is a period of preparation, and during that time certain qualities and dynamics come into play that make this transformation process possible.

We are in the presence of Sri Swamiji, our spiritual master, and the very atmosphere is charged with a potency that makes ordinary thought mundane and irrelevant. In this special place everyone works hard. We work to make the environment perfect, like a mandala, so that all who come may experience the same energy vibration easily. We work to give ourselves wholeheartedly to seva, to purify ourselves, to make the body light so we may experience that lightness of being. We work so that we may become as one, like limbs of the same body, to express and fulfil the vision of our spiritual master. And we work so that the intellect will release its hold and rest, be quiet and allow the still pure voice inside to be heard.

—*Swami Anandakumar Saraswati, Australia*

Rikhia 2003

Extract

Approaching the Akhara on the Friday before the program and the butterflies in my stomach had butterflies in theirs. Twenty of us had travelled together to Rikhia after three weeks in Munger completing our TTC with Swami Vedantananda. Some had never been to India before, let alone Munger or Rikhia! – and didn't know what to expect. I had been there two previous years and still didn't know what to expect! Rikhia is always a unique and overwhelming experience, that was all that was certain.

Sri Swamiji was there on the first day, though not to welcome us, as he had said quite clearly, but to inform us that this year the kanyas were the hosts, not he, nor Swami Niranjan or Swami Satsangi, but five hundred local girls, all under twelve years old. He explained how their virginity is not a physical thing, but a mental, emotional, sensual one, an

innocence which most of us have lost and don't know where to look for within us. The worship of the Cosmic Mother as a kanya is an ancient tantric concept, and a simple and beautiful one, as Sri Swamiji went on to say, to encourage us to find this innocence and purify within ourselves.

The girls' confidence would put most of us yoga teachers to shame. Their effortless leading of joyous kirtans, mc'ing of events and little four and half year old Sita leading the shanti path in English at the end of each session was an amazing and humbling experience.

The giving of prasad is an essential part of these yajnas and this year's chosen prasad was grain – and plenty of it – to rich and poor alike, locals and overseas guests. As Sri Swamiji reminded us, this giving is not charity, for charity is the mother of poverty. It is a giving of blessings from the Cosmic Mother. In the West we may ease our conscience by sending the occasional cheque to a charity for one cause or another, not really knowing where the money goes, but here there are no administrators or directors or marketing executives to take their cut, each and every penny is spent providing items of use to families in the villages Sri Swamiji has adopted, to give them the experience of receiving – maybe for the first time – as Swami Niranjan said, to strengthen and develop their communities, to develop their quality of life, and everybody loves receiving gifts!

Hundreds of devotees, sannyasins, BYB students and guests worked and worked throughout the program, doing everything from cleaning the toilets to packing prasad, to serving food, like ants a friend said, the only difference being we were not working to sustain our own small community but were serving others – offering our work as service to a higher force, to guru, to the Cosmic Mother. Dedicated to one man who himself is dedicated to serving God for the greater good of all those who are near him, and inspiring thousands of others to do the same in their own lives – to give, give, and give some more.

—*Sannyasi Brahmananda, UK*

Could you please explain Sri Swamiji's words, "When the mother retreats, the guru comes."?

During the 2003 Sat Chandi Mahayajna Sri Swamiji said that when the cosmic mother comes, the role of the guru is over. When the mother departs, the role of the guru begins once again. It is quite logical. The purpose of a guru is to bring the aspirant in front of divinity, or the transcendental nature, or God, or the higher Self.

The guru should not be seen as a person with a physical body, but as representing the quality and energy which inspires and motivates each of us to attain a glimpse of the transcendental nature that is contained within us and of which we are a part. The confusion comes when we identify with the guru at the physical level. Then we ask why the master with whom we have identified is physically absent during an event, but that is our shortcoming because the guru is not the physical body.

After all, when Sri Swamiji himself went to his guru Swami Sivananda's ashram in Rishikesh, he was an ordinary person, but with the grace of guru and also with conviction, dedication and surrender on his part, he became luminous. The guru tattwa manifested in him. So, do you connect to him because of the body, or do you connect to him because of that guru tattwa shakti in him? If you connect to him because of the body, you have missed all the secrets of spiritual life. If you connect with him because of the essence that he represents, it makes no difference whether he is there physically or not. As a spiritual aspirant, as a person sincere enough to follow the path of yoga, it is necessary to also identify with the quality or the nature of the guru which is inspiring, motivating and guiding all of us.

The guru tattwa, the guru shakti, is responsible for uplifting the human mind from the basic material plane to the higher spiritual and transcendental planes. That is the role of the guru. The role of the guru is not to sit in front of you physically and bless you and grace you. That is the job of pontiffs, not of gurus. Gurus are sparks. Swami Sivananda

created a spark in Sri Swamiji, the material was right, it caught fire. The guru creates sparks within all of us, but the material is not right and we don't catch fire. Sometimes our material is all wet due to our frustrations, tensions and anxieties, so there is a lot of smoke but no fire. Sometimes we are made out of material that can't catch fire, like a rock. Sometimes we are made of material which can catch fire and it burns.

There is a saying that if God and guru are both standing before you, to whom should you pay your respects first? The answer is to pay your respects to the guru first because it is through him that you have attained God. God is secondary, not primary. We have to understand what Paramahamsaji is doing in this spirit, that he is uplifting the level of our consciousness, our awareness, making us live yoga, not practise yoga.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

To Gurudev

Gurudev, your darshan is my only moment of religion.
Gurudev, where will I go searching for gods in temples,
when in temples I only want to see you.

Gurudev, your blessings are the only clothes I have to wear,
without them I am shamefully naked.

Gurudev, your association is the soul enchanting flowers
of spring to beautify the barren land of my personality.

Gurudev, your wise words are the nectar to fill the empty
vessels of my mind.

Gurudev, you are the unfathomable ocean to cleanse the
dirt of my ignorance.

Gurudev, without you I am like an old man without his
stick, like a mother without her son, like a dog without
its master, like a blind man without ears, like a lover
without his beloved.

Gurudev, your love is present everywhere like the
sunshine, yet I sit in my dark room and mumble.

Gurudev, your grace is ever resplendent like the ocean, yet I stand with my bucket inverted complaining of drought.

Gurudev, permanently I overburden you with a myriad expectations, yet you satiate them all like the ocean dissolves a teaspoon of salt.

Gurudev, the strength of your renunciation could crumble the Himalayas, yet the warmth of your love can match a million suns.

Gurudev, the respect that you command could make Mount Everest touch your feet, yet you are found with your head bent below the lowest of the low.

Gurudev, the life of your smile can wipe away a billion deaths.

Gurudev, your glory outshines a billion suns, outlasts a billion yugas and your amiability a billion moons.

Gurudev, your virtues are like the endless branches of a tree which are hidden by the beautifully dense leaves of humility.

Gurudev, the fruits of the tree are the love and devotion of your fully satiated devotees.

Gurudev, your glorious being is the majestic trunk of the tree and Lord Rama and Lord Shiva themselves are the life-giving roots.

Gurudev, the brightness of your forehead is incomparable; seeing it the sun becomes jealous and hides away at night.

Gurudev, you are like a magnifying mirror; whatever minute love we have for you is magnified infinitely and reflected back onto us with sun-like intensity.

Gurudev, you are the vehicle and you are the driver to take me across these long and weary deserts of delusion.

Mostly enamoured by the dance of maya, I forget the driver and I even forget where the vehicle is headed.

Yet, Gurudev, you are always there incessantly driving with infinite patience and infinite forgiveness, driving through many lives of ignorance and some moments

of realization, driving through adversity and the good times. You keep on driving sometimes in this form and sometimes in another and sometimes without any, but you never stop, you go on and on and on.

Gurudev, your love, like the laser beam, has the most perfect focus and the greatest intensity. Just as each photon in a laser beam travels in the same direction, each cell in your body vibrates with the name of God.

Gurudev, just as oxygen is all pervading in the physical atmosphere and due to our daily preoccupations we tend to forget it, yet if we have to live fifteen minutes without it, death of the body is certain. Similarly, Gurudev, you are all pervading and omnipresent and due to my sensual preoccupations I tend to forget you, but if I were to live a microsecond without you, there would be nothing left in me to die.

Gurudev, you have wiped the tears of lakhs of people in a world where helping anyone is impossible.

Gurudev, you have toiled incessantly to spread your guru's message, not even idling for the minutest moment.

Gurudev, you have sacrificed your wellbeing, your choices, your comfort, your time, to bring happiness in this world of sorrow.

Gurudev, like a gigantic tree you have offered shade to all your devotees irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, past, present, future, motives or intentions.

Gurudev, you have been the profoundest of teachers and an even more profound disciple in a world where teachers have nothing to give and disciples are incapable of receiving.

Gurudev, your message of yoga has deluged the world with life-giving nectar. The many lucky souls who have received a new lease of life due to your unconditional grace realize you as their only benefactor.

Gurudev, your message of bhakti will bring joy, happiness and compassion back into the lives of people and will show the world how to live.

Gurudev, you have been perfectly true to your name. With the sword of 'satya' you have dispelled the darkness of the world and now your subjects live in 'ananda' in your kingdom of yoga and bhakti.

Gurudev, your unconditional, unbreakable love for the villagers is incomprehensible to us, yet it has become inherent in each breath.

Gurudev, your superhuman endeavour to help the poor, the needy, the helpless, the weak, the hopeless, the handicapped is the greatest proof of your unbounded love, like the day is the proof of the sun.

Gurudev, you have made the kanyas of Rikhia outshine the greatest of the great. Is there a greater accomplishment than this? Is anyone else capable of doing this even if he tries? No one but you Gurudev, no one but you.

Gurudev, you have been the first to recognize and manifest the divinity in women. You have discovered the sacrifice and viveka in women and made it your most efficient tool. You have transformed man's greatest weakness into your greatest strength. You have worshipped the Divine Mother, Devi Ma, in her truest form.

Gurudev, your yoga jyoti has created a beautiful dawn which even the sun cannot aspire to match.

Gurudev, with your sublime efforts you have provided the materialists with a peaceful inlet and your bhaktas with a worshipping form.

Gurudev, you are a supreme visionary and for you the past and future are as tangible as the present.

Gurudev, what you say is not a reiteration of the Vedas, but in fact the Vedas are a reiteration of your experiences.

Gurudev, by your consecrating presence you have made many realize their dharma and thereby accelerated their mental, physical, creative, financial and spiritual growth.

Gurudev, like the most loving mother you have embraced all our weaknesses and slowly and sternly you eradicate all.

Gurudev, the prana given by you has led to the blooming of the flowers of many lives which were closed buds waiting in darkness for the dawn of your presence.

Gurudev, you are able to perform every act, yet due to your supreme love you allow your disciples to do seva so they can obtain divine grace.

Gurudev, you have time and time again rescued me from the deepest of trenches of sensual entanglements, yet there is not an iota of thankfulness in my heart. Who is a greater lover than you, Gurudev, and who is a bigger cheat than I?

Gurudev, all the bad qualities ever mentioned are epitomized by my behaviour, and all the perfect qualities emanate from you – no, they obtain their stamp of perfection from your association. Which wise person would favour such a mismatch, yet you tolerate me and embrace me in the greatest conditionless, causeless love known to me.

Gurudev, please give me the benediction that in times of happiness my heart sings only the beautiful melodies of your greatness and in times of sorrow my being realizes you as its only hope, its only support.

Gurudev, please give me the blessing that forever your name remains on my lips, your sight in my eyes, your words in my ears and your presence in my skin.

—Aditya Bhaskar, *New Delhi*

JOURNEY TO HEAVEN – THE SHAKTI OF A SATGURU

Extract

It began in October 2002. One day in meditation the thought came that even though as teachers and disciples we may have the knowledge of yoga from an intellectual perspective, the bhakti or devotional aspect of yoga was underdeveloped. I was inspired to host a yajna in a similar way to the events held in India by my guru, Swami Satyananda, and chose Sivaratri on 1st March 2003 as the auspicious date. For those who attended the whole day there was definitely a very special energy or shakti transmitted from my guru, and everyone who attended must have felt it.

After this event many students expressed a desire to visit Sri Swamiji and I wrote to him with the following request: “I have done all that I can, but I am unable to infuse the spiritual power of bhakti and worship. Please can we come and live with you for a short period so that the students can taste the life of yoga that the Satyam Yoga School is trying to establish here in South Africa.”

His reply offered two dates and I choose the most difficult and at the same time the most auspicious. Guru Poornima is the full moon of July and the traditional time to worship the guru. It is also the peak of the wet season, which is hot and uncomfortable. Without compromise, I explained to the students that this was a pilgrimage and not a holiday. With great enthusiasm we set off to visit India on 5th July . . .

Day two

The energy of Swami Satyananda is extremely powerful. Everyone found that even though we only slept for five hours each night and worked physically all day, we were never tired. At 7.00 am we were invited into Swami Satyananda’s personal residence for a two hour private darshan.

He chatted to us about the tantric significance of the yajna we had hosted and explained the important role of

fire, mantra and worship within the structure of a yajna. He then addressed members of the group and finally he invited us to sit with him for photographs. This is a rare event. We left this private meeting in a dream and spent the rest of the day wandering in contemplation.

It is difficult to describe the feelings, but a sincere yoga practitioner will understand that Sri Swamiji created within us a taste of the most powerful experience, samadhi. This is a blissful state of deep peace and inner calm.

Days three to seven

My personal experience was that Sri Swamiji would build the vibrational energy up each day to a crescendo which would slowly subside in the early afternoon, only to build up again in the late afternoon until 10.00 pm in the evening. This vibrational energy is the prana shakti, the spiritual power of Swami Satyananda, and he is able to infuse everyone with it at will. The end result is that when we left, it felt as if each and every particle of our body and mind had been rearranged and renewed . . .

When you meet a guru there are no doubts. He will touch you in such a way that even you yourself have been unable to reach. My advice is that such a guru is living today in India and, if you have it in you to experience a true guru, then visit Rikhia as soon as you can. Swami Satyananda is 83 years old and certainly one of the very few accessible satgurus alive today.

—Swami Yogasagar Saraswati, South Africa

On imitation of the guru

If we are looking for actions, which we see in our spiritual guides, that we would wish to imitate in our lives, it would be those actions which are a reflection of their teachings, not particular actions designed to teach by awakening something specific in a disciple or group of students.

Many of Sri Swamiji's disciples may recognize that they have found themselves at some stage imitating aspects of his

character that are so individual to him and so effective in him, which have impressed and inspired all those who come in contact with him, but which do not translate well through imitation in another. He is a leader through and through; a prince, a king, a monarch of all he surveys, and the problem in copying that is that it requires someone that special to carry that kind of authority effectively. There is room only for one ruler at a time! And who could follow him into the five fires of panchagni sadhana?

—*Swami Anandakumar Saraswati, Australia*

Feed your neighbour

When Sri Swamiji came to Rikhia to perform his higher sadhana in the peace of Shiva's domain, he received the command, "Take care of your neighbours as I have taken care of you." He says that at first he did not know how to help the people of the villages best. But in his own inimitable way he has solved the problem and fulfilled the command to the hilt (in true kshetrya fashion), causing ripples of compassion which are spreading to all corners of the globe. Sri Swamiji is the perfect example of someone who really lives, because he lives for others. What we see in Rikhia today is the unfoldment of the miracle of his caring for his neighbours worldwide; for both his materially poor neighbours and for the materially rich who are so poor in spirit, having forgotten what it is to give to and to care for their fellow sufferers on earth. Because for this Boddhisattva the whole world is his home and all the people in it are his family

This is the wonder of Sri Swamiji's vision. He shows us that when you nourish others, you yourself are nourished. You are enriched at a much deeper level of being which cannot be sustained by gross food alone, no matter how much you may eat. For one who does not feed others is always hungry, but when you look after the welfare of others you will also be looked after. The gift you give returns to you. Swami Sivananda, who is the source and inspiration of all

the work taking place in Rikhia, said, “Give to the poor, the sick, the helpless and the forlorn. Give to the orphans, the decrepit, the blind, the helpless widows . . . and thank the one who gives you the opportunity to serve.”

—*Swami Vibhooti Saraswati, Ireland*



2005

SEVA AND SADHANA

Who is your neighbour? These days, the whole world is next door, so all people are your kith and kin. Now, many of these relations of yours need your help. This is action without desire for fruits (seva).

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Reading the book *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland, I was constantly reminded of my own guru, Swami Satyananda and the work he has been doing in Rikhia, Deoghar, for his poor and needy neighbours, along with his personal sadhana, because he realized in Rikhia that without seva, sadhana does not bear fruit.

After having experienced the highest ecstasy, *nirvikalpa samadhi*, union with the formless Brahman, Paramahansa Ramakrishna, like Swami Satyananda, still chose to return from the heights he had attained, in order to serve and uplift his fellows. On the threshold of his deepest ecstasies Ramakrishna prayed to Mother Kali, “Oh Mother, let me remain in contact with men! Do not make me a dried up ascetic,” and she allowed him to remain on the threshold of relative consciousness for the love of humanity. Swami Satyananda also chose to remain on this threshold. He realized that self-realization is no realization at all as long

as so many are drowning in the darkness of ignorance and the misery of want. If we wish to go ahead in sadhana and progress in spiritual life, we must also serve those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Only on the two beautifully balanced wings of seva and sadhana can we learn to fly high.

Swami Satyananda told Swami Niranjanananda, “You can desire to become anything in life. It is your desire, and it can be your inspiration. You can wish to become self-realized, you may wish to be a saint, but what is the use of that realization if it isolates you from people?” When Swami Vivekananda beseeched his guru to allow him to remain in the highest samadhi, Ramakrishna replied, “How can you ask such things. I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary person. This realization will become so natural to you, by the grace of the Mother, that in your normal state you will realize the One Divinity in all beings. You will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor.” It appears therefore that the more we can perform selfless service, the better we can progress in our sadhana and the more we progress in sadhana, the better we can serve.

Atmabhava and the fate of the poor

Serve others with the feeling that God dwells in all and receives your service as worship. Service of humanity is service of God only. Service of humanity must not be mere mechanical acts. It must be done with atmabhava.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

In 1868, Ramakrishna went on a pilgrimage with Mathur Babu, his patron and the owner of the Kali temple in which he was acting as priest. On this pilgrimage, for the first time he discovered human suffering face to face outside the confines of the temple precinct. Rolland writes: “When Ramakrishna arrived at Deoghar with his

rich companion, he saw its almost naked inhabitants (the Santhalis), emaciated and dying of hunger, for a terrible famine was ravaging the land. He told Mathur Babu that he must feed these unfortunates. Mathur Babu objected that he was not rich enough to support the misery of the whole world. Ramakrishna thereupon sat down among the poor creatures and wept, declaring that he would not move from there, but would share their fate. Mathur Babu was obliged to submit and to do the will of his poor priest."

This story illustrates *atmabhava*, the feeling of oneness with all beings. Ramakrishna had developed *atmabhava* to such a degree that, like Sri Swamiji, he came to identify himself with the whole world. If he saw anyone being beaten or in a state of suffering, he experienced the marks of the beating and the suffering in his own body and mind, as he did the stigmata when he was worshipping Christ. He once said, while in a state of trance, "Jiva is Shiva (all living beings are God). Who then dares talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy but service, service, for man must be regarded as God."

Swami Satyananda tells us that spiritual life only begins when we can actually experience the suffering of others. Until that point is reached we are living only in the mind and have not yet contacted the heart, let alone the spirit. He tells of one night when he could not do his *sadhana* because the house of a poor widow with three children had burnt down and he felt her grief and distress as if it were his own. He could find no peace to continue his practices until he had seen that her house was rebuilt and her hope restored. He tells us, "When I eat, I think of the hungry and starving and send food to such houses. When the cold hits me, the first thought that crosses my mind is whether others have a covering to protect themselves from the cold."

When Swami Satyananda first came to Rikhia, Deoghar, the local people had no hope for the future. The government had completely deserted them. They had nobody – no food, no shelter, no medical care, no proper

work, no constant water supply for bathing or pure water to drink, not even enough clothes to cover their bodies! But, with his enormous heart, Sri Swamiji loved them. "They are very simple and innocent," he says. "They are poor but loving. They have big hearts and small bank balances." His wholehearted interest is now in these local people who, in turn, accepted him with love.

Sivananda Math

Loving God and serving others is the secret of true life.
The meaning of true life is service and sacrifice.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Swami Satyananda now feels for these Santhalis with the same *bhava*, or feeling, and in the same spirit as Ramakrishna once did; there is no difference in the tender and compassionate hearts of the two paramahamsas and all great souls. Sri Swamiji is now responsible for their welfare. In the name of his guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, he has brought into being Sivananda Math, a charitable institution, which provides housing, medical care, education, scholarships, employment, *bhoj* (feeding the poor), grain, tube wells, clothes, cows, bicycles, rickshaws, farming equipment, seeds and many other facilities for the village people. In the early days he even sent swamis to plough their fields. For, with the insight of a visionary, he warns us, "The villagers are the load-bearers of society, and when they crack, society will collapse. Therefore, we must recognize their role and accept their existence."

By far the most important seva done at Paramahansa Alakh Bara is educating the local children, mainly the girls. They are being given both a firm foundation of spiritual samskaras and a practical training for life and lessons in English. At present, there are over four hundred children between the ages of four and fourteen. Under the watchful eye of Sri Swamiji, they are being lovingly and carefully moulded as their hidden potential naturally unfolds. But

this is no ordinary education. It is how education was carried out in ancient times by the enlightened rishis. It involves the direct transmission from an enlightened sage to the pure, fresh and innocent minds that are open to receive and imbibe it.

Sri Swamiji stresses the importance of education, for it is children who are the hope for the future and the new harmonious yogic society that he has envisioned. The character of the future generation is in the hands of the women of our society who are mothers. To build a strong and peaceful society based on the principles of Sanatan Dharma, it is the women who have and can impart the qualities of gentleness, understanding, love of goodness and beauty, a desire for peace and a compassionate heart. Therefore, Sri Swamiji sees the upliftment of women as being of paramount importance for the betterment of society in general and advocates the education of girls as well as boys.

Charity

Through selfless service and charity develop the heart and cleanse the lower mind.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Sivananda Math is a charitable organization, but by charity Sri Swamiji does not mean mere philanthropic work done with ego, with the sense of 'I am giving'. His concept of charity is the same as that of Ramakrishna and he often reminds us that, "I am God's servant. God has asked me to do the work that is being done in the villages of Rikhia, so I am doing it. Swami Satyananda does not provide anyone with anything. It is not he but God who does it." To Paramahansa Ramakrishna, charity meant nothing less than serving God in the form of all people; for God is incarnate in man, woman and child. Therefore, he wished his disciples to attain self-realization for the very reason that they could better consecrate themselves to the service of humanity. One of his disciples, named Swami Sivananda, conveys this

idea beautifully, “Without the realization of the divine spirit within one’s own self and others, true sympathy, true love and true service are not possible.” Only through seva is the heart opened, and only when the heart is open can we truly serve.

Boddhisattwa

Hold your life for the service of others. The more energy you spend in elevating and serving others, the more the divine energy will flow to you.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Paramahansa Ramakrishna prayed to Mother Kali, “Let me be condemned to be born over and over again, even in the form of a dog, if I can be of help to a single soul. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man!” This is the message of Buddha, of Swami Sivananda and of Swami Satyananda. It is also the message of his successor, Swami Niranjanananda, who has said, “Let me take birth again and again and again, to help those who are suffering physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, to help people find their place in life, to wipe away the tears of suffering and push people out of this planet onto a different path. My sankalpa is to struggle to make others free.” This is the vow of the Boddhisattwa, one who is prepared to sacrifice his own freedom in order to come back to help the world until all beings have been freed from the wheel of samsara. The heart of the Boddhisattwa reaches out wherever there is a cry for help, whether near or far, and cannot stand to see the suffering of others.

And Sivananda Math is reaching out further and further to offer aid, for to Sri Swamiji the whole world is his neighbour in times of need. ‘Need’ is not just material, it is also mental, emotional and spiritual. The souls of countless people are crying out all around the globe, and he is answering their call.

Heart yoga

Service is yoga for purification of the heart and the consequent descent of light. Purify your heart by selfless and humble service of the poor and afflicted, and make it a fit abode for God to dwell in. Selfless service alone can purify your heart and fill it with divine virtues. Only the pure in heart will have the vision of God.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Sri Swamiji's work in Rikhia is now spreading around the globe as the flame of his love leaps from heart to heart. The seed was planted long ago in ancient times by the rishis who lived here when the area was covered with forest and dense jungle. Moreover, this is the place where the heart of Sati (Shiva's consort) fell in Satya Yuga (the first age of the world, or the age of truth). It is a place of the heart, a heart space, a *hridaya peetha*, and from here the bhakti renaissance, led by a modern-day rishi, Swami Satyananda, is springing forth once more.

—*Swami Vibhooti Saraswati, Ireland*

BRIEF SKETCHES OF A PARAMAHAMSA – THE GATE

The Sita Kalyanam program was fast approaching and Sri Swamiji was out on his tour of inspection after many months of sadhana in strict seclusion. Everyone was new to the situation, so it was all systems alert and stand by at the ready! The air was electric with the expectancy of darshan and the buzz was passing round the whole ashram – “Swamiji's out, Swamiji's out!” “Where is he?” “Have you seen him?” “He just passed that way!” “No, he's on the other side of the ashram.” Sri Swamiji moved around so fast and came and went so unexpectedly that it was difficult to know just where he was at any given time. So, darshan was not available to all this time round.

On that particular day I was working in the office and suddenly the message was given to me by a swami in high panic to open the Tapovan gate immediately. “Which one?” I asked as I grabbed the key and started to run. “The big one or the small one?” “The big one,” came the frantic reply. I ran at full speed towards the gate, not even looking right or left, and thinking that something very large indeed must be coming through, maybe a bus full of karma yogis or unanticipated early arrivals, or a load of clothing for distribution to the poor and needy during Sita Kalyanam.

Something very ‘BIG’

When I reached the gate I breathlessly threw both sides open wide. Expecting to see some large vehicle approaching, I quickly looked up and down the dirt road for warning signs, but nothing special was in sight in the simple rural scene – only a few unconcerned goats, some stray dogs and several munching cows (who seemed to be totally oblivious to the fact that Sri Swamiji had finally emerged from the fifth dimension), and open fields stretching into the distant countryside. All was an idyll of unconcerned peace and quiet.

However, when I turned round I saw that something definitely very BIG was coming from a direction I had not anticipated – behind me! To my surprise (and also confusion) the hugely tiny figure of Sri Swamiji himself was steadily approaching, magnificently alone, supremely grand, across the Tapovan compound towards me, with his majestically measured, even strides, flowing beard and free hair falling on his shoulders. He was wearing only a kaupeen and his wooden karao.

Am I a bull?

My heart began to beat faster and my legs to give way. I began to wonder as he came nearer and nearer, if it had really been necessary to open the big gate when the small side gate was more than adequate. All too soon Sri Swamiji had reached me and I received the answer to my silent question.

“Why have you opened the big gate?” he reprimanded me sternly. “Am I a bull?” he asked. “Am I a truck? Have some common sense!” he added with strong emphasis as he passed like a king through the big gate.

Well, I caught the message loud and clear along with the reprimand, but I also caught something else as he swept regally through the abundant space before him. A wave of bubbling joy which welled up in my heart at having received his darshan so close at hand after so long, at his wonderful way of teaching through a blend of strictness and humour, and at having been blessed enough to have been spoken to by him at all!

—*Swami Vibhooti Saraswati, Ireland*



2006

Tributes to Sri Swami Satyananda: 50 years of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement, IYFM, 1956–2006

Extract

How does one pay a tribute to a multifaceted spiritual diamond that dazzles, creating an astonishing pattern of ever-new beauty and eternal glory?

We grew up together at the lotus-like feet of Gurudev Swami Sivananda Maharaj. Yet, Swami Satyanandaji Maharaj was always someone special. Whatever he touched turned into pure gold. In the ashram in Rishikesh, there was not a single department or activity that he did not handle, and handle with extraordinary ability, dedication and devotion. His sadhana was integral; his siddhi is therefore perfection itself.

Today, he shines as the golden light of yoga; and this light shines in the hearts of thousands upon thousands all over the world: they who have met him have been completely transformed, and they who have heard of him from his devotees have only one desire, to have his darshan, and all of them are wholeheartedly dedicated to yoga.

May Swami Satyanandaji live long! is the prayer that every heart sings.

—Swami Venkatesananda,
Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

In Rishikesh Swami Satyanandaji was a very hard worker and very kind-hearted. What drew me most was his remarkable freedom from resentment and malice to those who had harmed or hurt him. He was a brilliant lecturer with a great sense of humour. Imbued with a sense of mission, even while at Sivananda Ashram, he was a renunciate at heart. Having built up a well-established and famous organization, after a quarter of a century's hard labour, he gave it all up. Very rarely does one see such an act of renunciation.

I had known Swamiji's spiritual aspiration and detachment in our early years in Rishikesh. What, however, struck me most at Rikhia was his arduous austerity, culminating in panchagni tapasya. Very few can endure such hardship. At his age, most of his peers would sit on the laurels of a successful spiritual mission and lead a comfortable life. His tyaga and tapasya is the most outstanding trait of his character today.

One of the dearest wishes of Gurudev Sivanandaji was the establishment of what he initially called Yoga Vedanta Forest University, where knowledge of all the branches of yoga would be widely available. This Swami Satyanandaji has realized at the Bihar School of Yoga. Another ideal of Gurudev's was public service through free medical treatment of the poor. This has been amplified through the projects of Sivananda Math. What, however, will have a worldwide influence is the Yoga Research Foundation's presentation of yoga in a scientific way, especially the therapeutic benefits. These are the fruition of Swami Satyananda's labour of love for the mission, the result of a lifetime of dedication and hard work.

—*Swami Shivapremananda, Sivananda
Yoga-Vedanta Centres, South America*

In April 1953, Satyabrat and I were invited to a program in Rishikesh . . . Suddenly my eyes happened to rest on a young sannyasin, who absorbed all my attention. Was he a god descended on earth or a man in the form of a god, I

wondered? The memory of that young ascetic overwhelmed us. In April 1956, we heard that Paramahansa Satyananda had become a parivrajaka sannyasin. We immediately wrote to him. He replied, “Rajnandgaon is on my mental screen. I will come, but in good time. My name is Satyam. Your name is Satyabrat. In you my *brat* or vow (of truth) is well established. In future Rajnandgaon will become my headquarters and you will help me.” On 28th August 1958, Swami Satyam gave diksha to me. He said, “From today you will be known as Mother Dharmashakti. Pray for her and for my mission. The chariot of my mission will have two wheels, namely yoga and dharma.”

—*Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati*

Swami Satyananda chose Munger, Bihar, as the focal point from which to spread yoga. Bihar has been the birthplace and playground of avatars, yogis, realized saints and siddhas. There was a time when any scholar who finished his basic studies would travel, not abroad like the modern student, nor to any big institution, but to Mithila to King Janaka, who was not only an emperor, but also a donor of wealth and knowledge.

Munger is named after the great Sage Mudgalrishi, and the most kind-hearted King Karna used to worship goddess Kali here and donate all the gold received from her blessings. Such are the rich antecedents of Munger. Swami Satyananda realized this secret, which had lain dormant for hundreds of years, and therefore made Munger the centre for his teachings. His decision has made the name Munger known to the entire world.

Swami Satyananda is a jivanmukta, free in this life, and he shows the path of freedom to all. Many people attain self-realization but remain in isolation. However, he did not retire to a secluded cave in the Himalayas and enjoy his blissful state there for he does not live only for himself. He made his knowledge available to all.

His mission is now providing guidance to many thousands of people. He has planted the Bihar School of Yoga like a *kalpataru*, a wish-fulfilling tree. Not only has yoga been popularized throughout the world, but at the same time Munger has been made famous. The credit goes to Swami Satyananda, an incarnation of renunciation, who occupies a shining place on the world map.

—*Swami Vidyananda Giri,*
Acharya, Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh

Swami Satyananda has propagated the miraculous science of yoga all over the world. This ancient science had lain buried in the womb of the earth for two or three thousand years. Very rarely is such a sage born, after a gap of centuries, who is able to ignite the spark in the sleeping human consciousness to again begin to search in the enveloping darkness. He fired the spark of curiosity in people's hearts and minds to understand yoga. Arousing such aspiration is not a simple achievement. This great work will have its effect today, tomorrow and even after a few generations.

—*Swami Poonyananda Giri,*
Acharya, Niranjani Akhara, Varanasi

Swami Satyananda is an intellectual giant who has striven to synthesize the essential import of our traditions of yoga and meditation with the so-called rationality of modern science. This synergy is directed towards evolving systems and disciplines which contribute substantially to the improvement of the quality of life of all adherents. A laudable aspect of Sri Swamiji's novel and refreshing approach is his thrust to uplift the rural underprivileged and tribal communities.

—*General B.C. Joshi, India*
Former Chief of the Army Staff

Swami Satyananda's life mission has been to establish the creative vitality of the art and science of yoga in the contemporary world, dominated by the decline of goodness and the ascendancy of evil. Sri Swamiji has shown through his mission the value of the perennial philosophy of yoga. His mission is spiritually distinctive in the sense that he is founder of no cult or sect, but of a fellowship of human beings keen to recover their roots. Sri Swamiji's mission is also distinctive because he is a true renunciate. He has not allowed the yoga of power to overcome the power of yoga. Sri Swamiji's example provides a continuing education in the tradition of authentic renunciation, extolling the importance of being in the world yet not of the world.

Sri Swamiji's mission constantly emphasizes solidarity with human suffering. He has, through precept and practice, sought to educate us that the foundation of a true spiritual morality is concern and responsibility for other beings who suffer. It is upon this foundation that the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and the Bihar School of Yoga are built. Sri Swamiji has thus added a new dimension of karma yoga. Through his mission he has taken the *amar jyoti*, eternal light, of yoga to all parts of the world, renewing hope, courage, compassion and solidarity for a better human future.

—Professor Upendra Baxi,
Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi

Yogic scientist

On his visits to Europe Swami Satyananda taught, first of all, six asanas or kriyas so it was easy for everyone to remember them, especially since he always taught all components together – how to breathe, where the mind should be, where the concentration should be, what the purpose was. Usually this would be explained in a very good lecture so you were prepared.

Of course he taught yoga nidra from the very beginning and even antar mouna from the first or second time. But

when he came, he picked a small set of very powerful techniques, taught those, and said to all of us, and we were hundreds, “Practise those six techniques, practise the pranayama I taught you, practise the pratyahara I taught you. Practise that for a year, then I’ll be back and I’ll teach the next round.” And we could remember it right after he had given it to us. We didn’t have to read books, it was so easy.

Instead of teaching arbitrary pieces of yoga, he always made a definite plan, an exact set of easily remembered, integrated techniques that covered all aspects of the personality. Easy for us to remember, easy for us to teach, and he encouraged all five hundred or so of us to teach. He encouraged everyone to teach independently, not to form large groups. He never supported any differences that developed.

From the first visit he prepared us to teach. Since he taught us so little in terms of what we had to remember, and so much in terms of potency, almost everyone became a very efficient teacher. Then the next year he came and taught a few more techniques, and we taught those. Then the next year he taught even more practices. So he always built solidly on the basis of the yoga practices which covered all aspects of the personality, always producing balanced overall practices. In this way, by the time he had visited us five or six times, we all had a deep knowledge of those practices we had practised for one, two or three years.

We still find teachers from other schools, who have been teaching yoga for years, say, “We never had yoga like this.” Swami Satyananda had constructed a complete sadhana for the whole personality, from the physical body to the spiritual, and therefore, though it was small it was much more potent than lots of exercise. When teachers asked us when we were going to speed up, we would say, “With yoga, the deeper it gets, the slower it gets.”

So this was Swami Satyananda’s message. He did not overload you with information. He gave just as much as you needed and if you practised it faithfully for a year, it was

like a little atomic bomb. It would open doors and last you a lifetime.

Swami Satyananda was the first great scientist of yoga. One of the characteristics of a great scientific mind is the ability to change everything back to basic principles, eliminating all irrelevant factors and then reconstruct it systematically. You will find this property in all the practices he developed. He eliminated all the mystery. No one has done it so masterly. He took a very careful approach to discover the essential components of these techniques. So those are clear indications of a great scientific mind.

One day he said to us, “If I had to do it all over again, I would not be a sannyasin, I would be a scientist. I would have strapped all these sannyasins and yogis into research machines and checked whether all these claims are really true.” Of course, if he had done that it would have been a great loss to us, but that’s what he said.

—*Swami Vasishthananda Saraswati, Canada*

You are Satchidananda

I first had Paramahamsaji’s darshan in 1959 in a *Ramayana* satsang where I was brought by chance through his disciple, Sri Dinanath Gupta. Later I heard about him from a friend, Shivendra Pandey. In 1961, during student life, I used to go every day for a Ganga bath as a form of exercise. On the way Shivendra told me, “My mother’s guru has come. He is a very young, brilliant and bright and beautiful swami. Would you like to meet him? He is teaching yogasana to everybody. Every night we are attending his satsang at the residence of Kailash Pati Babu.” I became interested and curious to see him.

In the evening we went there. I felt a great spiritual magnetism which attracted me to him. At the beginning of the satsang he sang a brilliant bhajan, *Shivoham, Amara Atma Satchidananda Mai Hun*. In that way he initiated me into the aim and purpose of my life. It was a very inspiring satsang which ended in silent meditation. Next morning I went to

join his asana class. It was wonderful. Within a few days I felt wonderful effects on my whole system. Slowly, many physical and mental problems were removed – I felt more healthy, energetic and efficient in day-to-day activities.

Later on, in 1962, Sri Paramahamsaji brought the planning of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement into being. The first meeting was held and many important members and devotees participated. Sri Paramahamsaji made a trip to Rishikesh and Badrinath with some devotees where he had his last darshan and blessings of his guru, Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

Due to the heavy work of IYFM, many devotees started thinking that it would be better if Paramahamsaji would stay in one place to direct the work. I was also eager to be close to Paramahamsaji and serve him. In 1963, Paramahamsaji was going to Munger for his Chaturmas program during the rainy season. I requested permission to join him, to serve him and also do some anushtana. Very fortunately he allowed me to do this.

It was a golden opportunity for me. For the first time I had an opportunity to visit Munger for Guru Poornima, and under the guidance of Paramahamsaji my japa anushtana began. A few devotees used to come for guidance and we would have yoga classes and satsang every day. Sri Paramahamsaji had a particular practice of *kayakalpa*, transformation of bad elements in the body. All the time he was busying himself in deep meditation.

After a few days we heard that Swami Sivananda had entered into mahasamadhi. Paramahamsaji dreamt about him and had wonderful visions and experiences. He gave the order to start the work which they had been thinking about previously – it was to prepare a few swamis with proper training for the propagation of a yogic culture.

Slowly members, devotees and disciples were increasing. Day by day the work was growing. Paramahamsaji was the source of inspiration for many people and their work. After completing my studies, some inner inspiration and

Paramahamsaji's love and attraction compelled me to dedicate myself to the spiritual path. For the benefit of suffering humanity I should not waste my time on material pursuits. Slowly, my training started.

Year by year Paramahamsaji's work and mission were growing. He had his international work – yoga from door to door and shore to shore. After completing the nine-month International Teacher Training course many invitations started coming from abroad, so he had to make an international trip to give the message of yoga to suffering humanity. He visited many countries and they were very much interested to learn the practical aspects of yoga from Sri Paramahamsaji. I have seen his wonderful method of teaching by which the most difficult subjects are made easy to learn. He was invited again and again so he had to tour different places time and again.

In front of BSY there was a huge old palace surrounded by bushes and rocky ground, known as Karna Chaura. Paramahamsaji visited the place and liked it very much. From that hill there was a panoramic view of the Ganga, in a semi-circle like the crescent moon, so the place was initiated with the name of Ganga Darshan. Paramahamsaji had to purify this place with its old rotten samskaras and prepare it for his yogic mission, and for that we had to struggle very hard.

He used to come with a big group of swamis and workers. Every morning and evening we used to come and work hard, cleaning the dirt and bushes. It was a wonderful experience of energy and enthusiasm working with Paramahamsaji. Always at the end of the day we used to have sweets, fruit and prasad as blessings; like that the work continued for many years. Now the place is completely transformed. The old palace has come into a new shape – a seven storey building as a symbol of kundalini from mooladhara to ajna chakra, with Paramahamsaji's residence, *Sri Nivasham*, spiritual glory with divine beauty and bliss. Really it is the abode of the divine mother Kundalini.

—*Swami Satchidananda Saraswati*

Researcher

Swami Satyananda is one of the greatest yogic researchers ever to have been born. He has always lived his life in the spirit of a researcher. We think of research as something that takes place in a sterile laboratory with expensive hi-tech equipment, something separate from daily life, but Paramahamsaji always considered research as part of his everyday moment to moment life.

This trend towards research started as a young child when he began to have spontaneous out-of-body experiences. He began to wonder why he was having these experiences. So as a child Paramahamsaji developed a deep interest in the inner dimensions of the mind. Beyond the external dimension there is something internal and this became a quest for him, something to be realized. He knew he would have to search inside himself. He left home at an early age to complete this inner search and to find out what was happening inside.

At Rishikesh he told Swami Sivananda, “I have had a lot of experiences, spontaneously, not just in meditation, but I reach a point where there is a block and I can’t go further. Why? What can I do?” Swami Sivananda said, “You have to work, you have to stay here for some time and then it will lift.” So the young man said, “I will serve you, I will be your disciple, I will do whatever you say.”

For twelve years he stayed and his inner research deepened under Swami Sivananda’s guidance. Swami Satyananda also guided external researchers in Rishikesh. He started to work with a few invalids, a few patients, who came to the ashram with different diseases. He tried out different yoga therapies. Also, he kept a careful record of everything and everyone that he treated, taught or worked on in some way, to see which techniques worked on which personality types and which diseases, and so on. Eventually he left Rishikesh and travelled widely, meeting people from many types of backgrounds. He found that every single one of them had different types of problems.

He set to work to see how he could help them solve their problems and he found out that the one thing that worked best was yoga. So he decided to focus upon yoga. He founded the Bihar School of Yoga, and continued his experiments. Everyone who came to him became an experiment for him. He tried to work out how he would help the people who came through his knowledge of the different yoga practices.

As a young boy Swami Niranjan was a subject for Paramahamsaji's research. He experimented with yoga nidra on Swamiji when he was a little boy. He read history, mathematics, physics, geography, languages, Upanishads, Gita to Swami Niranjan while he was asleep in yoga nidra for about two or three years. He educated him in his sleep. We can see that the experiment was successful because Swamiji has become learned now and wise. True to his word, Swamiji was not educated by the ordinary school education which children go through today. Instead Paramahamsaji taught him everything he needed to know.

Similarly, everyone was an experimental subject for Paramahamsaji. I was also a subject because when I first came to the ashram I was in a deep state of introversion. Paramahamsaji began to work on me. He decided that he was going to cure me of my introversion through karma yoga. He started me off with physical work. Slowly, slowly the treatment worked. A couple of years later, he gave me some written work to do.

In this way, over the years Paramahamsaji made everyone a subject for research. We always thought he made us his disciples because he loved us, but actually with us he was trying out different things to see how they worked.

One day, standing on the roof of the old ashram, Paramahamsaji pointed up to this hill and said, "One day we will have an international yogic research foundation on that hill. Researchers and scholars will come from all over the world to do a lot of important research work there." At that time it was just a dilapidated old bungalow and we thought,

“How will that ever become an international yogic research foundation?” But just as he said, it is becoming one. In 1980, we moved up there and Paramahamsaji built the whole infrastructure and in 1984 inaugurated the Yoga Research Foundation. A few years later he left the place totally in the capable hands of Swami Niranjan and went out in order to further the inner research. He travelled all over India to find the ideal climate in which his research could expand further.

Finally he went to Rikhia, where he began in earnest the inner research he had started as a small child and which he wanted to complete in his old age. This internal research has also led him to some external ideas. So he started to set up the village research which he is still doing now, where he finds different ways to help the poor people.

He has been a researcher throughout his life. We are his disciples, but we are also his subjects and even when he leaves this life, he will be researching every step and dimension of the way.

—*Swami Satyadharma Saraswati*

Swami Satyananda is one of the leaders of the modern yogic renaissance. He is a living tantric master and a perfected yogi. However, it is as a scientist that his contribution towards man's evolutionary destiny will be recognized for centuries to come. Swamiji's contribution to the field of medical education is visionary, compassionate and far-reaching. At a time when humanity as a whole can hardly be said to be doing well, with the Third World starving, and the other countries polarized into armed paralysis, Sri Swamiji's presence on this planet is like a beacon to show us that man can change the course of his destiny, if he so wishes.

—*Swami Sanyam, Australia*

In Swami Satyananda we see an example that in life it is more important to remain true to oneself and to search for wisdom than to show the world how holy and good you are. Swamiji showed me yoga as a path, a way of living and as a tool to keep me on that path.

—*Swami Janakananda, Sweden*

Swami Satyananda is a very exceptional human being as well as a great teacher. He took classical yoga and brought it all together into a meaningful whole. Satyananda Yoga teaches all systems of yoga in an integrated, holistic way, thus allowing aspirants to evolve all the positive qualities of the body, vitality, mind and emotions as well as to develop wisdom and to realize their spiritual roots.

—*Dr Rishi Vivekananda, Australia*

NEWS COVERAGE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Bihar School of Yoga inaugurated

Munger, January 1964

On Basant Panchami, 19th January, the akhanda jyoti was lit at the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, a direct disciple of Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh. The silver lamp will burn for all times to come in memory of Swami Sivananda, keeping aloft the glory of yoga and beckoning one and all towards the yogic path.

Swami Satyananda, the Chief Acharya of the Bihar School of Yoga and founder of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement, emphasized how yoga could be practised in towns and homes instead of caves and kutirs. There was a time when seclusion was a necessity, but times have changed and now everyone can practise yoga. Peace, power and wisdom is everyone's birthright and everyone should make an effort to achieve it.

Sri Swamiji is ever ready to teach the techniques to all at the Bihar School of Yoga, where students irrespective of country, creed or nationality can undergo practical training in the science of yoga.

Yoga is the culture of tomorrow

Munger, November 1 1966

Inaugurating the Third International Yoga Convention in Munger, Swami Satyananda, appealed to the 2,000 delegates from India as well as Poland, Mexico, Finland, Czechoslovakia, UK, USA and Australia to carry the seed of yoga far and near, and plant it in fertile ground so that yoga could find deep roots in the soil of the entire universe.

He said the saints and sages of ancient India had gone into the causes of human suffering and prescribed yoga as the cure. He emphatically stated that yoga was as essential as anything for life. In modern society the majority of people were mentally disturbed and yoga provided the best remedy. Both spirituality and materialism are essential components of life, and thus yoga is inevitable for those who consider materialism as their end in life.

Sri Swamiji said that yoga was the culture of tomorrow which would unite all humanity leaving no barriers of race, language and continent. The world has to adopt the yogic way of life because 'it is the culture of tomorrow'.

Yoga's role today

The Bharat Jyoti, Patna, 18 February 1968

Briefing newsmen on the importance of yoga, Swami Satyananda said, "The practice of yoga could eliminate from society the exploitation of man by man, the terror of world wars and the sense of insecurity from people's minds." To Swamiji, yoga is a 'blueprint for perfection'. He said, "Yoga has a special role to play in the world today, as its practice

can remove physical and mental afflictions As a science yoga is useful for both the individual and society.”

He decried cheap stunts in the name of yoga and said there was nothing in any branch of yoga which was beyond reason and science. Feats such as drinking acid, walking over water or remaining buried underground for many hours were a mere ‘magic show’, he declared. “They are not yoga nor are the performers yogis since such feats not only tarnished the good name of yoga, but also created doubts and suspicions in many reasonable minds about the purpose of yoga.”

He said, “The science of yoga had great physical and psychological potential. The effect of yoga techniques on human physiology is an inviting field for research for modern physiologists, and scientific investigations into yoga psychology are a challenge for modern psychologists.”

Swami Satyananda believes that ‘yoga is secular and can be applied in any religion or faith of the world without any hitch’.

He said the interest in yoga in foreign countries was growing rapidly. Students from more than ten countries are currently completing a nine-month yoga Teacher Training course at the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.

Yoga is a technique for living

Times of India, Bombay, February 1968 (Extract)

Yoga is attracting more and more people from the West. It has drawn to Rishikesh the Beatles in search of tranquillity of mind and to Bombay many foreigners for a yoga seminar conducted by Swami Satyananda. What manner of man is this swami, of whom we have heard so much?

I met him at a luncheon attended by a cosmopolitan gathering, including businessmen, prominent citizens and newsmen. What struck me most about Swami Satyananda, a frail, smiling man with penetrating eyes, was his refreshing candour and simplicity. He invited questions and answered them all with relish.

Clad in saffron robes, Swami Satyananda spoke at length on the virtues of yoga, 'the heritage of the past and the culture of tomorrow'. There was no need to give up one's normal way of life to achieve peace and tranquillity within, which is the real aim of yoga, he said. The daily office duties and domestic chores called for maximum care, efficiency, imagination and concentration. Yoga gave man the ability to be master of all situations. Besides it protected him 'from falling prey to his senses, tensions and frustrations'.

If the coming generation ignored yoga, "this great technique of actual living", he warned, a time might come when people might be forced to meet unthinkable disaster never experienced by humanity in the past.

World yoga tour

Free Press Bulletin, Bombay, 9 May 1968 (Extract)

Swami Satyananda is on a world tour to disseminate practical knowledge of yoga to yoga aspirants all over the world. He will visit the USA, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, England, France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Finland, Germany, Austria and other countries, as a cultural ambassador of India. Swamiji's mission in life is to bring the maximum amount of happiness to the maximum number of people in the world during his life and to present to the world yoga in its most benevolent and scientific form.

Though an adept in all the traditional branches of yoga, Swamiji is far from a traditional yogi. A keen student of western psychology, he wants to apply yogic techniques universally for the ills of the world. Hitherto, because of its long tradition of secrecy, authentic yoga has flourished in isolation. Swamiji wants to do away with this secrecy and make the magnificent riches of yoga available to all. He believes that yoga has little to do with religion; it is just a way of life. Yoga means many things to many people, but Satyanandaji has decided views about it.

Satyanandaji is a man with a mission. To revive this mission of universal yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship Movement for the propagation and spread of yoga on an international basis. It is his firm belief that no one is unfit for yoga because yoga is a universal transcendental force while at the same time a specific technique which can mould not only the individual but also society and the world as a whole.

Goodwill mission

The Australian, 10 May 1968 (Extract)

Swami Satyananda, shaven headed with large brown eyes and a gentle smile, is the world head of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement and director of the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, India. Swamiji, who has been studying yoga for twenty-five of his forty-six years, explained that this trip – his first outside India – would allow him to spread goodwill and expand the movement in many countries.

Solution to peace

The Village Voice, New York, 11 June 1968 (Extract)

“The major problem facing the world is peace, not food or shelter, for if there is no war for hundred years there will be prosperity everywhere. I believe that any country that has to live in war and keep the economy flowing for that purpose generally creates tension. We Indians have been the worst sufferers in this for many centuries. We know what it means. Apart from destroying lives, it destroys the economy of the country and can change people’s good nature.”

Swami Satyananda feels that yoga is the solution. “The development of yogic consciousness, not only in the common man but in leadership, can be a powerful answer to the problems of fear, hostility and ignorance,” he said. “The masses will compel the leadership to practise it, because in the ultimate analysis the problem lies in the leadership.”

Asked if the United States matched his expectations, he said, "I expected that people would be thinking of worldly things, but I have come to conclude that behind the veil of prosperity there is a spiritually starving soul in every American. Every time a society is at the peak of prosperity, a spiritual revolution inevitably takes place. Soon society will change."

Swami's path to tranquillity

Chicago Sun-Times, 13 June 1968

Swami Satyananda is a disciple of the famed guru, Swami Sivananda of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh in India. In 1963, he went into voluntary seclusion for four years, founding the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger in 1964. In April 1968, he began his international speaking tour.

Yoga, he said, means 'harmony'. In India the practice is at least 5000 years old and is not a religion but a folk tradition, involving meditation "so a person can be at peace." Swami Satyananda, whose name means 'truth and bliss', says yoga acts like psychotherapy or tranquillizers. Where psychology ends, yoga begins. People in the West with anxiety neuroses have to be told that yoga can help in these matters. He said, "Western doctors, professors and ministers have talked of peace and God for years, but in India we have holy men and women who actually are at peace."

There are many different kinds of yoga, but the one practised by Swami Satyananda consists of three states: tranquillity, concentration or fixation, and meditation or awareness. To reach tranquillity a person must "remove the clamour of the outer personality." The aim of meditation, when consciousness transcends inner space to illumination, is what he calls the divine state.

Although yoga goes against the grain of much of modern society where materialism often seems to be the most living faith, Swami Satyananda thinks things will change. "Despite prosperity and wealth, people are not

satisfied with the age-old tradition that the body alone is man,” he said. “The search for spiritual enlightenment has come over this country very recently, though spiritual passions have been almost stifled by materialism.” He said the mind is more real than the body and the spirit is more concrete than matter.

Satyananda praises US society

Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bombay, 29 June 1968

“America is a nation full of vitality, her youth is in search of something that will take its mind from things which we know are evil and damaging to the upliftment of human thought,” said Swami Satyananda when he arrived in London after an extensive two-month tour. He expressed satisfaction with what he had undertaken to accomplish. He was especially delighted that more non-Asians were listening to his talks than Asians. He said, “In Asia people are generally familiar with the teachings of Indian philosophy.”

He said transcendental meditation was another name for japa yoga. He does not prescribe a particular system of meditation. Those who seek his assistance in spiritual knowledge are seen by him individually and prescribed a certain course of meditation according to their temperament.

He said, “There is so much wealth that the minds of American people have slowed down, their capacity to think rationally is hindered by affluence. I am convinced they will abandon their craving for materialistic living and follow the path chalked out by such great men as Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and by contributions made recently by Swami Chinmaya and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Americans want to know how to expand their consciousness. So they are looking to India and her people to assist them in their study of meditation and spiritual thinking.”

A master of yoga in Geneva

Geneva Tribune, 30 August 1968

“In Europe you suffer from insomnia, depression and have heart attacks at the age of forty! In India we have famine and tuberculosis but live to be very old. Your illnesses are mental, ours are physical.” It is to help Europeans heal their mental illnesses that Swami Satyananda Saraswati, director of the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, India, has come to give a series of conferences in Geneva on ‘Yoga and Modern Man’.

For several years yoga has been invading our country. It is practised from Stockholm to Rome, from Zurich to Paris. The Europeans discovered it after the Americans. They understood that many illnesses were primarily mental. They are convinced that the lifestyle we lead in the West is at fault. They are seeking a relaxation that will bring more than physical benefits. And for that they are turning to India.

Swami Satyananda said that he spent twelve years with his guru, a swami whom he served and who transmitted his knowledge to him. After leaving his guru, he travelled alone across India and continued to learn. He established the Bihar School of Yoga six years ago. Asked how much time one should dedicate to yoga practice, he said half an hour in the morning and, if possible, at night.

Yoga gains popularity in foreign lands

Hindusthani Standard, Calcutta, 27 September 1968

Returning to India after a five-month world tour to spread the message of yoga, Swami Satyananda told newsmen that the science of yoga had advanced to a great extent in foreign countries. He said that yoga institutions were very popular in foreign countries where people were being trained in its scientific aspects. He said, “Yoga is a heritage that needs to be preserved carefully and studied conscientiously in all its aspects.”

Yoga, a substitute for drugs and alcohol

Times of India, 23 September 1969

People who feel the need to take drugs, drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes should stand on their heads instead. "Headstands are an excellent substitute for drugs," said Swami Satyananda Saraswati, one of the world's leading exponents of yoga. During the recent International Yoga Conference held in Australia, he said that yoga exercises were a proven means of overcoming the stress and strain of modern living. "It costs nothing to exercise," he said. "There are no distressing side effects. You look younger. You feel younger. Who needs drugs?"

According to Swami Satyananda, yoga is not some strange old religion. It is a much needed practical and desirable way of coping with life in the 20th century. "More and more people are realizing this," he said. "The Russians have taken to yoga. They employed Polish yoga instructors to teach their astronauts yoga breathing techniques to help improve blood circulation."

Approximately six hundred people from all parts of the world attended the convention, the first ever held in Australia.

Yoga in Australia

Beads and Bangles, Australia, October 1969

During his recent Australian tour, Swami Satyananda Saraswati said, "There is a vast spiritual awakening in this country and I am overjoyed by the strength of the yoga movement. In some ways Australia could be a more fertile place than India for interest in yoga, because of its high economic level, it has great potential for yoga practices. The Australian government should encourage the study of yoga in whatever way it can, because yoga is the spiritual discipline of millions of Australia's neighbours in the East."

With these words Swamiji signified the growing momentum of the yoga movement, a momentum gained through

regular visits and spiritual guidance from overseas, through the establishment of the International Yoga Teachers Association and a free exchange with overseas.

Swamiji first influenced the Australian yoga movement when he invited a group of teachers to attend his International Yoga Convention in Bihar, India, in 1966. He initiated both Michael Volin and Roma Blair into karma yoga and elevated both to the rank of swami.

At Swamiji's request, the IYTA was founded to promote the development and growth of yoga teaching standards and principles, initially in Australia, Canada, India and South Africa, and ultimately throughout the world; to provide a forum for discussion, consultation and cooperation between members; to disseminate information about yoga; and to further understanding of Eastern philosophy, mythology and culture in the Western world.

Swami Satyananda appeared on our horizon at a time when the materialistic West was looking eagerly to the ancient East for a meeting point. Age-old superstitions are melting, science has given man a glimpse of new possibilities, and his psyche has brought him to the crossroads.

Swamiji, the harbinger of a new psychic era, presents yoga as a therapy and a new way of life. He has lifted the veil of secrecy and declared that 'yoga is secular'.

World yoga movement sprouted in Rajnandgaon

Raipur, 5 November 1976

The foundation of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement was laid out in Rajnandgaon, Swami Satyananda disclosed today. He said he came to Rajnandgaon in 1956 and met Satyabratji. They discussed the subject with a view to giving a new dimension and outlook to yoga and decided to project yoga in society and present an analysis of the scientific aspect of yoga.

On being asked the position of yoga abroad, he said hatha yoga was popular in America, while Australians also

favoured bhakti yoga. In South American countries raja yoga is gaining ground. The yoga practised in Soviet Russia can be placed in the class of raja yoga. In this context he referred to the book *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*. Yoga has helped to bring about social awakening in the West and introduced the concept of community there. He said that scientific research studies were going on all over the world to show the benefits of yoga. Several foreign countries have accepted it as a part of education. He said the Government of India was examining a proposal to include yoga in the educational curriculum. He stressed the need to introduce yoga teaching at the primary level in schools and to children from the age of seven.

As yoga changes people's behaviour so it can play a great role in social reformation. Pranayama and dhyana reduce aggressive tendencies. In several USA jails yoga has been introduced in order to change the prisoners' criminal attitudes. In mental hospitals hatha yoga and raja yoga help in treating the patients, he added.

He announced that a research centre will be set up in Munger where research reports from centres in India and abroad will be coordinated. This centre will help to find yogic solutions for chronic ailments and psychic troubles.

In quest of the divine

Times of India, 7 November 1993

If the purpose of life is to find the divine, then the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger provides the right ambience. Located on a large hill overlooking the Ganga, it is a veritable seat of spiritual learning and practice.

Paramahansa Satyananda, the founder of this school, is supposed to have attained enlightenment at a God-forsaken place in Munger, supposedly the citadel of Danavira Karna of the epic *Mahabharata*. Having had his spiritual education under the tutelage of Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh for over twelve years, Paramahansa Satyananda,

who had taken to parivrajaka life and travelled extensively in different parts of the Indian subcontinent, came to Munger in 1956, “not with the idea of founding an ashram, of creating a tradition or of teaching and preaching, but to live and understand myself. I wanted to experience the totality of existence beyond body and mind, name and form.”

“During this period from 1956 and 1963, I developed an understanding of the vibrations that seemed to have remained even after 5000 years. On the desolate, deserted and barren hillock of Karna Chaura, I sat for days, weeks, and months, but did not know exactly what it was that I was assimilating. I knew that Maharaja Karna was a man of great magnanimity who used to give gold in charity and alms to all the people who came to him. I thought this seat was not really for me. If Karna gave gold, I could not give even a morsel of food, because I had nothing but two dhotis which are all my wealth.”

In 1963, his mission seemed to unfold before him – that he must be the instrument in heralding the dawn of the psychic age, that he could achieve it by spreading the message of yoga, i.e. the message of peace. “If Karna’s age demanded gold, this age demands peace – shanti inside, shanti outside and shanti everywhere. The one who can distribute shanti, the way of peace, is the Karna of today. Now I sit on Karna’s throne and to offer peace had been my desire.”

Fired by this desire to spread the message of peace ‘from door to door and shore to shore’, Swami Satyananda Saraswati founded the International Yoga Fellowship Movement with a view to creating a global fraternity of yoga. The Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) came into existence in 1964, though on a modest scale.

As Swamiji began to spread yoga within and outside India and more and more devotees began to flock to Munger, it became a pressing necessity to create a larger institution. Some of his disciples pooled their resources and made a bid to acquire the hilly terrain which became known as Ganga Darshan.

Some people strongly opposed the move. Their apparent contention was that the historical monument must not be tampered with. It was also a cultural shock for the people of Munger town, where modern civilization was yet to find a tow hold, to witness scores of foreign sannnyasins descending on the place and living in a blissful world of their own.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, visionary that he was, did not criticize those opposing his efforts. As the years rolled by and Swamiji's social and spiritual message began to make a visible impact in the neighbouring villages, popular resistance turned into popular approbation. That paved the way for the building of new premises at Ganga Darshan.

Swamiji's real achievements lay in initiating training in the techniques of integral yoga, which is the hallmark of the institution he founded. He carried forward his mission by setting up the Yoga Research Foundation (YRF) in 1984 which is sponsoring pioneering research to establish yoga as an essential science for the further development and evolution of mankind. The major research programs sponsored by BSY are related to the effect of hatha yoga and meditation on the endocrine and nervous systems, on diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular problems and hypertension.

The positive outcome of this research is borne out by the thousands of people undergoing specialized yoga practices within the country as well as outside. The fact that BSY is now represented by more than five hundred branches all over India as well as in countries as diverse as Australia, Greece, Spain, France, Germany, UK, Scandinavia, Colombia, USA and South Africa is an eloquent testimony to the success of Swami Satyananda's dream project.

2007

The ideal sannyasin

When Swami Satyananda was about to be initiated by his guru Swami Sivananda, he asked him, “What am I expected to do after sannyasa?” Swami Sivananda replied, “Nothing, just continue to work in the kitchen, the printing press, carry water, manage the office and accounts, manage the ashram, do everything that you have been doing.” Paramahamsaji said, “If I have to do what I was doing at home, I might as well go home and exhaust my karmas while supporting and raising a family. When I have exhausted everything, I should come back.” Swami Sivananda replied, “No, returning to household life will not exhaust karmas, it will create more karma. It will create attachments, expectations and ambitions which are the bondage of the mind. If you continue to work in the ashram, the belief that you are acting for your guru, God or humanity will free you from the identity of being the *karta*, the doer. At home you will not experience surrender, whereas in an ashram you have to cultivate the quality of surrender.”

Swami Sivananda gave Paramahamsaji a clear indication: “You have to work hard until the age of sixty and exhaust your karmas. After that you can live the life of a sannyasin.” Therefore, Swami Satyananda did not become Swami Satyananda on the day of initiation; he became Swami Satyananda forty years after having taking sannyasa. For forty years he worked hard to develop the identification, attitude

and lifestyle of a sannyasin, and came to the point where today the whole world looks to him as the ideal of sannyasa.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Learning to flow with life

Extract

The journey of yoga took me to India and to my guru, Swami Satyananda. Living with him for sixteen years, I imbibed the essence of yoga in my heart, and now have the great honour of sharing this with others. I have never opened a textbook on yoga. In the ashram, I did many types of work such as cleaning toilets, cooking, sweeping, gardening, packing books, construction and public relations work, almost without rest and expectation. These activities were transformed into yoga practices by adopting the right attitude. I learned that yoga is not only a science reduced to physical postures, but a posture of the mind adopted in order to flow with life.

Many people talk about the art of flowing with life, but are not really able to do so. You will know if you are able to flow with life when a very difficult situation arises. If you can accept the difficulties with the same attitude as you accept positive events, you can say you are flowing with life. The yoga of truly flowing with life was the difficult training that I was given in the ashram. Sometimes I slept in the worst room, and then I would be given the best room, and then moved outside under a tree with no room. I had to learn to have the same attitude in each and every experience.

Once, when least expecting it, I was assigned to teach a stress management course to twenty-five executives from an important company. I had no idea how to do this, but it was my guru's instruction. Suddenly I felt an energy transmission in my heart and was able to give the seminar. Yoga came to me, not intellectually, but as a gift through my heart.

—*Swami Muktidharma Saraswati,*
Director Anahat Retreat Centre, New Zealand

Yajna 2006 – open-heart surgery

Every yajna is special. Somehow this one seemed extra special. There was a particular peace in the ashram from the moment of arrival.

After days of travelling in planes and trains, the movement was over and a stillness began within. Perhaps the contrast with the outside world was more stark than ever. I had left an Australia beset with worry and fear amidst its plenty. Its government, media and people can no longer deny the reality of global warming as a seemingly endless drought leaves communities without water and farmers with failed crops and animals they cannot feed. A sense of sadness and confusion is spreading as we wake up to this most ‘inconvenient truth’. The ‘war against terror’ dims in the light of this overdue realization of what we ourselves have done. I stepped out of that hard world with its desperate edge, and into Rikhia. Here the feeling was of an eternal and indestructible stability and quiet. The presence of the gurus was tangible, as if it could be held in one’s open hands.

My new job was photography. Through the lens and through my body I experienced the event. My mind was left to follow as best as it could.

On the first morning Swami Satyananda was there. And also on the second, third, fourth and fifth. He was there the whole time, laughing, dancing, singing, chanting, giving satsang, mixing with the children, having a word with old friends, relaxed and happy, wise and seeing. As the prasad distribution went on day after day, the feeling of his great sankalpa, for peace, prosperity and plenty for all, was shown to us in all its dynamism. His example was before our eyes as thousands received the prasad of Devi: practical things, especially clothing, to ease our lives.

In his ‘open-heart surgery’ satsang he put the message very clearly. Clean out your arteries, we were told. You all need open-heart surgery. The arteries are blocked. Your hearts are blocked. I am the heart surgeon, I will open your

hearts and then your chequebooks will also open. Only when you give freely will you want for nothing.

The scalpel was wielded with skill and precision. The vision of the kanyas and batuks was that scalpel. They were everywhere, managing the whole event with discipline and care. Children who live in simple huts of mud and straw coordinated this massive event efficiently and smoothly, from the chanting to the tilak. They were even Swami Niranjan's minders. Gone were the giant bodyguards of past years. In their place were small boys, linking arms around him if the crowds swelled too close. It was a circle of thin arms that could not be broken . . .

. . . The final day of yajna is many hued. During kanya pooja the kanyas are worshipped with food and blessings. Swami Satyananda explained that they are only kanyas up to the age of twelve. The older girls are not included in the pooja, though they are otherwise fully involved. And the boys, he said, are not for worshipping . . .

. . . Five days of energy, brilliance and activity are over. The masses move out and the dismantling is swift. At the completion I searched for some words to help hold on to the experience. The words that came were simple ones. Joy. Happiness. Fulfilment. Love. Words, I hope, that indicate some success in Paramahamsaji's operating theatre.

—*Swami Ahimsadhara Saraswati,*
Satyananda Yoga Centre, Hobart, Australia

The exploding light

Over forty years ago in the late 1960s when we opened the Acacia House Centre for universal spiritual events (the centre teaches healing, meditation, vegetarian cookery classes, and more recently hatha yoga classes), little did Karl, my husband, and I realize the exploding light of wisdom, teachings and life experiences that lay before us.

We were helped and guided by a loyal and well-connected Indian family who lived nearby, Mr and Mrs Ashoka. They

introduced us to the various visiting swamis in London, and it was through this that our spiritual awareness was extended.

However, the beginning of our spiritual awakening was when by request and arrangement with Mr Ashoka, we were invited to have a private meeting with Swami Satyananda, who was then staying with an Indian gentlemen who had a big house in Mayfair. We drove up from Acton very early in the morning, full of apprehension and wonderment as to what this meeting would present.

On arrival, we were greeted by our host and ushered into the room where Swami Satyananda was waiting for us. Being quite inexperienced with the eastern culture, we sat rather nervously on the floor opposite Sri Swamiji, who greeted us with great humility and spiritual warmth. To remember what the conversation consisted of now, at the age of eighty-four, is rather difficult, but I do remember the atmosphere and sense of peace, loving kindness and superior wisdom. After a discourse and conversation, Sri Swamiji proceeded to give us a blessing and our spiritual names, Shiva and Parvati. This was quite an unheard of practice at that time. He also gave us our mantra. It was at this point that the exploding light seemed to manifest around me. It was like entering into a new dimension. We drove back in a trance-like state of exultation and peace. Sri Swamiji had assured us that he would come and stay at the centre and take classes in hatha yoga and meditation in the near future.

Later in the day, I walked over to the park to buy a newspaper. I looked at the Indian newsagent and he seemed to be surrounded by a bright light. The atmosphere was charged with energy, human love and compassion. I think he was aware of something unusual, going by the expression on his face.

At that stage of my life, I was unaware of spiritual emanations and auric fields. All I knew was that I was surrounded by this wonderful, harmonious light of love. That is why I have called this story 'The Exploding Light' – an experience which manifested this wondrous phenomenon

through my first encounter with a spiritual being, and which lifted me into another dimension.

How blessed I am to still be in contact with Swami Satyananda through the ashram, which is still spreading the light of God to those in need! May the work of Sri Swamiji and all those dedicated to him be upheld as a shining example to others in the world.

Now, in the evening of my life, another phase of experience is presenting itself. We had a motto in the Acacia House Centre: Teach by being, learn by doing. It is only through experience of everything do we learn, and in how we use that experience do we silently teach others.

—*Parvati (Betty Francis), The Acacia House Centre, London, UK*



2008

My biggest learning : the yoga of compassion

Extract

Sri Swamiji says, “When you buy a dress for your child, buy another set for the child that does not have one.” However, it is not only when we come to the ashram for seva that these principles can be enforced. Our guru’s teachings can be carried forward into the world outside. Looking for opportunities every day to help – maybe a friend who needs a shoulder to cry on, or an elderly relative who could do with some love and caring, or a child who could benefit from some encouragement, or our own parents who might be growing old and need attention. When atmabhava starts to be the perspective from which we operate, guru’s energy and grace seem to flow freely and strongly.

—Sannyasi Vishalakshi, Bangalore

The art of giving – culmination of the Rajasooya Yajna

All worlds, visible and invisible, are just grains of sand in this empire of the heart. Serve, love and give are keystones, and Rikhiapeeth is its capital. Swami Satyananda is the emperor.

History was made here during the twelfth and final year of the Rajasooya Yajna, which was conducted from 10th to 14th December 2007. Tens of thousands of devotees from

all corners of the world and India, from all castes, creeds and religions, gathered to participate in this unique and auspicious event which marked the culmination of Swami Satyananda's sankalpa for the peace, wellbeing, plenty and prosperity of all.

One of the main features of yajna is the grand scale distribution of prasad. In this final year of the Rajasooya Yajna, Swami Satyananda offered prasad to all participants, which included the multitudes of delegates from all corners of India, over sixty countries of the world and tens of thousands of families from Rikhhia and neighbouring panchayats. For more than a month, a continuous flow of people, organized under the banners of their countries, states, cities and villages came to the yajnastral to receive the prasad of Devi Ma.

Only eighteen years ago, Swami Satyananda came to Rikhhia to live in solitude after renouncing the worldwide empire of yoga that he had created while fulfilling a mandate given to him by his guru, Swami Sivananda – to spread yoga from door to door and from shore to shore. At that time, Rikhhia was the poorest panchayat of India's poorest state, Jharkhand. From day one, innocent and pure-hearted villagers recognized the divine grace of having a sannyasin of the highest calibre in their midst. Regardless of the deprived and neglected conditions of their lives, from the dire poverty of their homes, villagers offered to Swami Satyananda the first rice from their crops, the best vegetables from their gardens and the purest water from their wells.

There is a cosmic law that whatever is offered with a pure heart and without expecting anything in return reverberates through the chambers of eternity and comes back to the giver multiplied a thousand fold. Shortly after arriving in Rikhhia, Swami Satyananda was called once again by a divine voice commanding him to help and love his neighbours as his own self.

Initially, he adopted twenty-four villages of Rikhhia panchayat and all the families were taken care of in all

aspects through the vehicle of Sivananda Math – from providing houses, wells, quality seeds for agriculture and farming tools, to the means of employment through distribution of thelas, rickshaws, motorcycles, sewing machines and the basics of blankets, clothes, household goods, food and education.

The ever-growing family of Swami Satyananda gradually included panchayats adjoining Rikhia, and in this the twelfth and final year of the Rajasooya Yajna, more than 250 villages from 19 panchayats were recipients of the sacred yajna prasad. More than 30,000 families received generous kits consisting of: steel ghara, topia, karhai, thali, glass and katori; blanket, bedcover, towel, dari, quilt; lantern, bucket, long length of plastic rope, soap powder and soap bar, lock, calendar; shawl, cardigan, sweater, raincoat, sari, thermal underwear, shirt, dhoti, cap, muffler, shoes and socks, ribbon and comb; rice, mustard oil and coconut oil – the list is endless! All of these items were given by the hands of the Rikhia kanyas, and an army of Rikhia batuks was on alert to help the villagers carry it home. In addition, bicycles were distributed to kanyas pursuing higher education, thelas, rickshaws and motorcycles to deserving villagers, schoolbags, notebooks and stationery to thousands of students from the entire area, and wheelchairs to the disabled.

Special prasad of additional warm clothes and assorted food was given to old age pensioners and widows of Rikhia panchayat. These aged people, often living alone and struggling for bare existence, have regained their dignity through the material and moral support offered by Sivananda Math. Currently plans have been made for an old age home to further help these people who have only Sri Swamiji to look to for aid and sustenance.

During the Sat Chandi Mahayajna 2007 the generosity of Swami Satyananda was shown to the fullest extent by the many daily distributions of Devi Prasad to the 1008 kanyas and batuks of Rikhia – his adopted children.

Each day of the five day program the kanyas and batuks were presented with a new outfit which they would proudly wear the following day. They received a mixture of traditional and modern outfits from around the world. In each and every outfit they shone brightly as from these new clothes they imbibed a sense of self-confidence and worth. They flooded the yajnaasthal with colour and vibrancy. The kanyas also received several sets of stunning jewellery, including gorgeous gold earrings as well as a silver and turquoise necklace set.

On the first day they wore their sporty red and yellow Spanish jogging outfit, which would have qualified them to feature in any fashion magazine! The dazzling blue traditional Gujarati outfit on the second day was covered in glittering mirrors, which seemed to illuminate the entire yajnaasthal. The kanyas especially loved the floor length skirts which sparkled as they danced. On the third day the kanyas and batuks looked like princesses and princes from a fairy tale in their stunning white and gold Moroccan outfit. The ornate lace design was unlike anything they had worn before, but they were more than willing to give it a try! A complete contrast was created on the fourth day and the entire Tapowan area was flooded with vibrant colour as the kanyas and batuks sported their new green unisex corduroy suit and big bright red tie.

On 14th December, the final day of the yajna was the Kanya Pooja. The kanyas and batuks wore the traditional Nepali outfit for kumari kanyas, which is worn specifically during kanya worship. The majestic red tones reflected the magnificence and power of Devi and her presence was evident in each and every kanya. The kanya's outfit was complemented by the most elaborate golden jewellery, including earrings, necklace and headpiece. As part of the pooja, Devi prasad was presented to all of the kanyas and batuks. They received a schoolbag full of grains, games, toys, clothes and stationery, jewellery and cosmetics, individually packed for over five hundred kanyas.

Another feature of the Sat Chandi Mahayajna was the presentation of 108 awards each day to kanyas and batuks who had excelled in a particular area of academic development or in holistic development. They received watches and solar torches along with many other items. The categories for awards were varied, including encouragement awards for havan and worship, punctuality, neat and clean appearance, spontaneous acts of kindness and honesty. Awards were also presented for those with 100% attendance at English, computer and surya namaskara classes as well as for regular attendance at evening kirtan and chanting programs. Special awards were presented to the best of Rikhia's dancers and a special category of the most likely to succeed in Bollywood! Kanyas and batuks of Rikhia, our children, are coming in the future to clean the mirror of our heart.

All this was made possible by the generous donations received from devotees from India and all parts of the world. Truckload after truckload of various goods, including gold and silver ornaments, medicines, games, toys, wrist watches, clothes, mountains of rice, saris and household items (to mention just a few) often made a long queue in front of the ashram gates. Each day Swami Satsangi would give instructions that everything must be distributed by Makar Sankranti, every single item from the shelves of Prasad Kutir must be given. We really had a very hard time fulfilling that because whenever the last round of village prasad bags was packed, another truck overflowing with offerings to Sri Swamiji and Devi Ma was waiting at the gate to be received! On her inspection of Prasad Kutir on Makar Sankranti day, Swami Satsangi commented: "I feel like the yajna has just started!" Throughout the year, prasad is continuously distributed and the shelves of 'Bholenath Readymade Store' never become empty.

The doors of Devi's divine grace are wide open at Rikhiapeeth. Throughout the Rajasooya Yajna, her vibrating presence was felt by all, and her blessings will continue to shower on us for years to come. Swami Satyananda's twelve year sankalpa has been completed and the seed of his

sankalpa is firmly planted. He is now the emperor whose empire has no boundaries – he is the conqueror of our hearts.

The mantra of Swami Sivananda: ‘Serve, Love and Give’, which has been carried out by Swami Satyananda at Rikhia, is a blessing for humankind in a world where the majority of us know only how to take, and never having quite enough are always wanting more and more. We are all lucky to be touched by the presence of the guru who performed on each of us an ‘open-heart surgery’. As an open heart overflows with love, Swami Satyananda has created a very unique account here at Rikhiapeeth – a bank of hearts. The mysterious alchemy of guru’s presence merges them all into One Heart, which beats in rhythm to the mantra *Aim Hrim Klim*.

Sri Swamiji, even our love and devotion to you are your gifts to us.

—Swami Shankarananda Saraswati,
Former Vice-Chancellor of Bihar Yoga Bharati

My experiences as a Rikhia kanya

Extract

During the initial years I used to go to the ashram only for English classes. I was taught to read, write and talk in English. I was also taught some mantras and kirtan. In my English class I learnt to chant the *Saraswati Vandana*, which, along with some other kanyas, I once sang for Sri Swamiji. I was very happy that day.

I am happy that Sri Swamiji gave us the chance to conduct these programs. We felt very satisfied to see the audiences spellbound during our recitations. Sometimes it also happened that when we sang kirtans, so many people, including Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi, could not stop themselves from dancing.

—Sinu Kumari
graduated Rikhia Kanya

Towards understanding Chakravartin Satyam

Extract

“I am now an Emperor,” proclaimed Swami Satyananda Saraswati, at an extraordinary event, attended by a large gathering of thousands of disciples and followers from all over the world at Rikhia, on 14 December 2007, marking the completion of the 12th annual Rajasooya Yajna. With this, the swami also became a Chakravartin, an Emperor.

This proclamation raises many questions, because beloved Satyam (as I fondly call him) is also a renunciate. How may a renunciate become an emperor? And indeed, with what scriptural authority may a renunciate perform the Rajasooya Yajna which hitherto could only be performed by kings (since kings alone could become emperors)? How may we understand a spiritual being as a conqueror? And more, what kind of empire stands thus constructed? What may constitute its symbolic significance and its future effective histories? How may this empire relate to the sound and fury of contemporary politics in which many beings and entities claim their right and power to construct new secular empires? . . .

. . . I present these reflections with a hope that you will respond in agreement as well as disagreement because as Satyam insists, “What makes us human is the capacity to be different from one another, combined with the ability to communicate with each other and to engage in dialogue, especially with those with whom we disagree the most.” . . .

. . . This understanding should suffice here to attend to a preliminary question: How may a renunciate perform such a yajna and claim the status of an emperor? I raised this question to Satyam who conceded, with a beatific simplicity, that his reading of the yajna accorded well with the scriptural authority or canon. Yet, with a twinkle in his eye, he asked: “What does kingship signify?” Answering his own question, Satyam proceeded to say that a king is a figure of speech, a metaphor, of just governance. The righteous king collects

taxes in order to distribute the gains among the poorest of the poor subjects. Royal authority or governance is justified in acting even coercively to collect public revenues only when these are directed to the betterment of the worst-off. If this is so, why should a spiritual being who receives *daan* (tributary offerings) and dedicates this to the most needy not be regarded in terms of kingship? If Swami Satyananda is thus already the figure of a spiritual king, the next step is the transition from King to a Chakravartin. . . .

. . . Popular knowledge not based on university certifications or credentials does have a right to exist, just as scientific enquiry has a right to bring these under the microscope. Because knowledge and knowers are finite entities, arrogant truth-claims everywhere undermine openness, understanding and tolerance which always ought to animate the quest for knowing. Satyam insisted that what makes us all humans is the 'clash of ideas', outside which humans become simply, even cruelly, 'inhuman'. That something we call 'human' is already extinguished when we seek to reduce or negate the potential for dialogue because it is this potency of *chetana* (vigilant self-awareness) that in the very first place constitutes the idea of being and remaining human in any meaningful sense of that term. . . .

. . . May the beloved Satyam be long with us all, so that we may further strive to recapture our essential being and self-sameness for the benefit and upliftment of the suffering and vulnerable others. Like the Prince of Denmark, Satyam offers something within us 'that passeth show'. Unlike Hamlet, the Paramahansa invokes no melancholia of revengeful striving. It goes without saying, and beyond saying, that Satyam offers the ecstasy of many ways of knowing through which alone the life of the spirit may have a new emergence.

The new empire inaugurated at Rikhia summons each one of us to take seriously the suffering of the immediate and distant, worst-off, forever humiliated and silenced others. To fail to heed this call is also to forfeit any claim to the ethical

agency and dignity of remaining human. The best tribute we may offer to the Paramahansa Chakravartin lies in just this: each one of us ought to reinvent Swami Satyananda in our everyday lives.

—Prof Upendra Baxi
Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi



2009

Yoga Poornima: journey into luminosity

Extract

Rikhiapeeth, the abode and tapobhoomi of Swami Satyananda, hosted the first Yoga Poornima from 8th to 12th December 2008, celebrating Sri Swamiji's 85th birthday. During the program, a Mahamrityunjaya yajna was conducted in which Lord Shiva was invoked and worshipped. The word poornima means 'full moon', but here it represents the completion of a process or cycle, the culmination of a life journey. When the word yoga is added to poornima, it indicates the attainment of a particular state, where the level of consciousness has reached its evolutionary peak. The moon's journey starts in absolute darkness on amavasya and ends in complete luminosity on poornima. Sri Swamiji embodies that state of complete luminosity.

The highlight of the entire program was Sri Swamiji's vibrant presence throughout the worship. From morning to evening, he would sit, witness, guide, and fill the entire event, audience and venue, with a magical inspiration. Thousands of people had gathered to receive the blessings of Sri Swamiji and Shiva, and not a single person walked out empty-handed. Delegates, guests and devotees of all age groups and from different social classes, castes and religions came together from all corners of the world. Each

became the recipient of blessings, grace and prasad that were distributed in abundance to all present.

All the items given during the yajna were not gifts, but prasad. As Sri Swamiji said, prasad is not a gift or a donation, neither is it charity. Any item that is given with love for the prosperity and wellbeing of the recipient and received with dignity and blessings is considered as prasad. Each item that was distributed was first placed as an offering in the worship.

Sri Swamiji wanted to make sure that all the villagers of Rikhia would be present on the last day of the yajna. To ensure this, he devised an ingenious and beautiful strategy. Rikhiapeeth ashram currently has approximately 1,500 children, who come regularly for English, computer, dancing and chanting classes, and programs, and to whom prasad is given from time to time. Half of them are girls, kanyas, and half are boys, batuks. All the kanyas and batuks came daily during the Yoga Poornima program, and many of them were an integral part of the program with respective duties to perform. On the third day, all the kanyas were asked to come with their fathers. They all came, were fed, and received prasad. On the fourth day, all the batuks were asked to come with their mothers. They too came, were fed, and received prasad. On the fifth and last day, all the children were asked to bring both their parents, and the 1,500 children arrived with both parents.

The parents of Rikhia Panchayat had no choice but to do as their children had asked because, as Sri Swamiji said, these children are his 'mobile phones'. All he had to do was to tell them, and the parents had no say in the matter.

—*Swami Suryaprabhakar Saraswati*



On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee World Yoga Convention 2013, Munger, Bihar School of Yoga is pleased to present *The Golden Collection*, a compilation of the first publications of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Originally published in booklet format during the 1960's and 1970's, their modest nature made the wealth of the ancient science of yoga accessible to one and all.

Some volumes of *The Golden Collection* are of a different nature. They present tributes paid to Sri Swami Satyananda over a period of fifty-five years. From 1954 onwards people expressed their recognition, gratitude and love. These volumes are a chronicle of devotion to the extraordinary man and his mission.

Volume 7 of *The Golden Collection* is a tribute to Sri Swami Satyananda, spanning almost fifty years of his life. From 1963 to 2009, *Yoga* magazine became the forum of an unceasing flow of recognition and admiration which came from all corners of the world. These tributes are true *Testimonies of Love* dedicated to the yogi, guru and master who inspired all through his radiant personality and practical teachings. The variety of tributes allows the reader of today to renew their connection and commitment to the path shown by Sri Swami Satyananda.



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